

# **GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE MILITARY: A FOCUS ON JOB SATISFACTION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Lee-ann Verushka Markom, student number 47019654, declare that “Generational Differences in the Military: A Focus on Job Satisfaction and Emotional Intelligence” is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or have quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

SIGNATURE

DATE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	viii
 CHAPTER 1      SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH.....	 1
1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION.....	1
1.1.1 Generational cohorts .....	2
1.1.2The military environment .....	2
1.1.3 Job satisfaction.....	3
1.1.4 Emotional Intelligence .....	5
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	6
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	9
1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE .....	9
1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES .....	9
1.6 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH .....	10
1.6.1 General aim of the study .....	10
1.6.2 Specific aims of the study.....	10
1.6.2.1 Literature review .....	10
1.6.2.2 Empirical study aims .....	10
1.7 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE .....	10
1.7.1 Constructs of interest in the study .....	11
1.7.1.1 Generation.....	11
1.7.1.2 Job satisfaction.....	11
1.7.1.3 Emotional intelligence .....	11
1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	12
1.8.1 Research approach.....	12
1.8.2 Research method .....	12
1.8.2.1 Research participants and sampling .....	12
1.8.2.2 Ethical clearance .....	13
1.8.2.3 Measuring instruments .....	14
1.8.2.4 Statistical analysis .....	15

1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT .....	16
1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	17

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW OF GENERATIONAL THEORY, JOB

SATISFACTION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE .....	18
2.1 GENERATIONAL THEORY .....	18
2.1.1 Generations in the workplace .....	20
2.1.1.1 Silent generation/veterans/traditionalist/matures .....	22
2.1.1.2 Baby Boomers .....	22
2.1.1.3 Generation X .....	23
2.1.1.4 Generation Y .....	24
2.1.2 Generations in South Africa .....	25
2.1.2.1 Pre-apartheid generation .....	26
2.1.2.2 The apartheid generation (born 1938-1960) .....	26
2.1.2.3 Struggle generation (born 1961–80) .....	27
2.1.2.4 Transition generation (born 1981-93) .....	27
2.1.2.5 The born free generation (born 1994-2000) .....	27
2.1.3 Criticism of generational theory .....	29
2.1.4 Generational differences in the military .....	30
2.2 JOB SATISFACTION .....	32
2.2.1 Definitions of job satisfaction .....	33
2.2.2 Approaches to job satisfaction .....	34
2.2.2.1 Cognitive judgement approaches .....	34
2.2.2.2 Social influence approaches .....	34
2.2.2.3 Dispositional approaches .....	34
2.2.3 Theories on job satisfaction .....	35
2.2.3.1 Two-Factor Theory of Job Satisfaction .....	35
2.2.3.2 Expectancy theory .....	36
2.2.3.3 Value-percept theory .....	36
2.2.3.4 Job characteristics model .....	36
2.2.3.5 Social information processing .....	36
2.2.4 Challenges in the military that may impede or decrease job satisfaction .....	37
2.2.5 Job satisfaction and generational differences .....	39

2.2.5.1 International studies .....	39
2.2.5.2 South African perspective .....	40
2.3 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE .....	41
2.3.1 The history of EI .....	42
2.3.2 Models of EI .....	43
2.3.2.2 Trait models.....	45
2.3.2.3 Competency models.....	46
2.3.3 A new development in the field of EI .....	47
2.3.3.1 GENOS EI inventory .....	47
2.3.4 Criticism against EI.....	49
2.3.5 EI in the military.....	50
2.3.6 EI and generational differences.....	52
2.3.7 EI and job satisfaction .....	53
2.3.8 Research on EI and job satisfaction .....	53
2.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELEVANT TO THE CONSTRUCTS UNDER INVESTIGATION.....	54
2.4.1 Generational differences .....	54
2.4.2 Job satisfaction.....	55
2.4.3 Emotional intelligence.....	55
2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	56
CHAPTER 3 .....	57
RESEARCH ARTICLE .....	57
CHAPTER 4 .....	95
CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	95
4.1 CONCLUSIONS .....	95
4.1.1 Conclusions arising from the literature review .....	95
4.1.2 Conclusions arising from the empirical study .....	97
4.1.2.1 Specific aim 1: To determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI across Gen X and Y in the military.....	97
4.1.2.2 Specific aim 2: To determine whether a statistically significant difference exist in overall job satisfaction between generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military.....	97

4.1.2.3 Specific aim 3: To determine whether statistically significant differences exist in job satisfaction facets between the different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military .....	98
4.1.2.4 Specific aim 4: To determine whether a statistically significant difference exist in total EI between different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military.....	98
4.1.3 Conclusions relating to the central hypothesis .....	99
4.2 INTEGRATION OF THE STUDY.....	99
4.3 LIMITATIONS.....	100
4.3.1 Limitations of the literature review .....	100
4.3.2 Limitations of the empirical study .....	100
4.4 general RECOMMENDATIONS .....	101
4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH .....	101
REFERENCES.....	103

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Differences in generational labels and cut-off dates .....	21
Table 2.2: Cohort forming events in America and South Africa .....	28
Table 2.3: Various definitions of job satisfaction.....	33
Table 2.4: Overview of the four-branch model of emotional intelligence.....	44
Table 2.5: Genos EI seven-factor model .....	48

## Chapter 3

Table 1: Demographics of the participants (N = 186) .....	72
Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the JSS and subscales.....	74
Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the Genos EI and subscales.....	75
Table 4: Correlations between JSS subscales and Total EI mean.....	77
Table 5: Correlations between job satisfaction and EI for Gen X and Y.....	78
Table 6: Mean differences: Job satisfaction and job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Y .....	80
Table 7: Mean differences: EI between Gen X and Y .....	81
Table 8: Hypotheses summary table.....	82

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Combined distribution of age into generations (n = 186) .....	73
Figure 2: Mean scores of the JSS .....	74
Figure 3: Means scores for Genos EI.....	76



## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AET	Affective Events Theory
ECI	Emotional Competence Inventory
EI	Emotional intelligence
EQ	Emotional Quotient
ESI	Emotional-social intelligence
FET	Further Education and Training
GI	Government Issue or General Issue
HR	Human Resources
IMTA	International Military Testing Association
JSS	Job Satisfaction Survey
SA	South Africa
SAAF	South African Air Force
SAMHS	South African Medical Health Services
SAN	South African Navy
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SD	Standard deviation
SUEIT	Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test
UNISA	University of South Africa
US	United States
USAWC	United States Army War College

## **SUMMARY**

### **GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE MILITARY: A FOCUS ON JOB SATISFACTION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

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The aim of the study was to explore the differences between generations X and Y in the military by exploring whether belonging to a particular generational cohort influences perceptions of job satisfaction and emotional intelligence (EI). Data on generational groupings, job satisfaction and EI was drawn from a convenience sample of 187 members from the Human Resources (HR) Division in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). Descriptive statistics, correlations and t-tests for independent samples were used to analyse the data. Analysis revealed that job satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with EI. Furthermore, the empirical study also yielded evidence to support a difference between Gen X and Gen Y in relation to two job satisfaction facets, namely promotion and supervision. The findings, however, did not support a difference between Gen X and Gen Y in terms of overall job satisfaction and total EI. The leadership of the SANDF may be able to use the study's findings to guide effective organisational policies and processes to maintain and retain a loyal and productive human resources pool working in cohesion despite underlying differences.

**KEYWORDS** cohorts, emotional intelligence, generational differences, Genos EI, Gen X, Gen Y, HR, job satisfaction, Job Satisfaction Survey, military, SANDF

## **CHAPTER 1 SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH**

In this thesis, differences between generational groupings in the military are explored with specific reference to job satisfaction and EI. Two generational groupings currently found in the military are assessed in respect of their levels of job satisfaction and EI to investigate the differences and relationship among these constructs in a military context.

In this chapter the background and motivation of the study, the problem statement, the aims, paradigm perspective, research design and method as well as the chapter layout is discussed.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION**

Globalisation, accelerated technology, demographic changes as well as changes in social trends have a significant impact on organisations (Gratton, 2011; Twenge & Campbell, 2013). One such impact is the trend that people of different age groupings or representing different cohorts (who vary considerably in terms of attitudes, values and work ethic) have to work together. The inherent differences in these age groupings (known as generations) may result in communication and coordination problems among staff members or employees from different generations (Kunze & Boehm, 2013).

Generational membership, as a construct, generates considerable interest among both academics and researchers. Various studies have confirmed differences among various generations in terms of work values (Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge & Campbell, 2013), job satisfaction (Curry, 2005; Martins & Martins, 2013; Shragay & Tziner, 2011), work ethic (Meriac, Woehr & Banister, 2010) and career orientations (Lyons, Ng & Schweiter, 2013).

The focus of research on generational differences has changed over the years. Earlier research focused on comparing baby boomers and generation X (Gen X) (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010), while more recent research focuses mostly on Generation Y (Gen Y) or the generation known as millennials (Campbell & Twenge, 2014; Lyons et al., 2013; Martins & Martins, 2013; Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

### **1.1.1 Generational cohorts**

The generational cohorts particularly prevalent in today's workforce are generation Y (Gen Y) also known as millennials, generation X (Gen X) and baby boomers (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012; Saba, 2013; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge et al., 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Another generational grouping mentioned in the literature, but not of interest to the current study is the traditionalist, silent generation or veterans (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008; Kupperschmidt, 2000). The traditionalist or silent generation is no longer employed within the military, as they would all have reached the compulsory retirement age of 65 in 2010 (Department of Defence, 2014).

A number of studies show that the different generations have a distinct and unique perception of work, in terms of what motivates them (Benson & Brown, 2011; Close, 2015; Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar & Kaifi, 2012; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). In other studies, no significant differences could be found between the different generations in their beliefs about the importance of compliance with authority and their perceptions of what makes an effective leader (Deal et al., 2013) while some studies found the effect size of the differences to be quite small (Becton, Walker & Jones-Farmer, 2014; Knipe & Du Plessis, 2005). Irrespective of these differences in findings, some researchers acknowledge the theoretical notion of generational theory (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Twenge, 2010) and suggest that methodological limitations should be addressed in future studies (Becton et al., 2014; Reeves, 2006).

Van der Walt and Du Plessis (2010) emphasise that understanding these differences could assist organisations in reducing workplace conflict and misunderstandings between co-workers. These differences in work-related behaviour and attitudes could also have an impact on employees' job satisfaction and could indicate a need for creative and effective organisational policies, leadership strategies and management styles to attract and retain productive employees (Curry, 2005; Martins & Martins, 2013; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

### **1.1.2 The military environment**

According to Reid (2013), the most critical challenges faced by organisations globally, including military organisations, are the attraction and retention of new talent and identifying working conditions that will lead to positive behaviours and attitudes. A

prerequisite for identifying these working conditions is insight into the psychological, attitudinal and technological differences among the workforce and how these differences can be used to increase organisational effectiveness (Martins & Martins, 2013). Knowledge about employees' identities and differences among them may assist in harnessing these differences for the good of the organisation (Lyons et al., 2013; Reid, 2013; Twenge & Campbell, 2008, 2013).

The military, compared to a civilian environment, requires a different approach to leveraging diversity factors across generations for organisational effectiveness. Employees in the military typically have to cope with complex demands that integrate cognitive, physical, interpersonal and emotional aspects as well as life-threatening and dangerous situations (De Beer & Van Heerden, 2014; Reid, 2013). Conditions in a military environment are fairly unique, and a career in the military often involves more than just an occupational choice (Smith, 2015). It entails the selection of a lifestyle that permeates almost every aspect of a person's life (Ditsela, 2012; Kamphuis, Venrooij & van den Berg, 2012).

Very few studies have examined the effects of routine stress associated with military jobs (Sanchez, Bray, Vincus & Bann 2004). The causes of job stress in a military environment identified in the literature vary and range from inadequate staffing levels with long and irregular working hours to dangerous and unpleasant working conditions. Further causes of job stress include duty schedules conflicting with family time, low pay and frequent rotation as well as menial and repetitive tasks and boredom (Kamphuis et al., 2012; De Beer & Van Heerden, 2014; Mohd Boki & Abu Talib, 2009).

This diversity in the causes of job stress in a military environment suggests that job stress may not always be linked to operational duties, but may stem from more subtle aspects such as, among others, how satisfied military employees are with their job (Kamphuis et al., 2012). According to Sanchez et al. (2004), job satisfaction in the military may be somewhat unique due to the inherent stressors associated with the work environment.

### **1.1.3 Job satisfaction**

After tracing research on job satisfaction back to the early 1930s, Weiss and Merlo (2015) concluded that job satisfaction is one of the most widely-studied constructs in the social

and behavioural sciences. Interest in the job satisfaction construct relates to its presumed influence on job performance (Judge, Thoreson, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Locke, 1970; Mafini, 2014; Mafini & Poee, 2013).

Mafini and Poee (2013) found that employee satisfaction enhances organisational performance and that if optimised, employee satisfaction can be used as an incentive to enhance organisational performance. The researchers also concluded that when employees are dissatisfied, organisational performance decreases.

According to Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane, and Ferreira (2011), if work conditions are congruent with employees' needs, they are less likely to leave an organisation. This finding corresponds with Martin and Roodt's (2008) conclusion that job satisfaction, and not organisational commitment correlates more strongly with turnover intentions.

Job satisfaction recently also received some attention in studies that investigated generational differences within the workplace (Curry, 2005; Martins & Martins, 2013; Martins & Martins, 2014; Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011; Wilson, Squires, Widger, Cranley, & Tourangeau, 2008). This renewed interest stems from the idea that different generations experience job satisfaction differently and that organisations need to consider this in order to retain their competitive advantage (Gratton, 2011; Twenge, & Campbell, 2013).

Job satisfaction has also been linked to the construct of EI (Carmeli, 2003; Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Psilopanagloti, Anagnostopoulos, Mourtou, & Niakas, 2012). Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008) point out two reasons why EI may influence job satisfaction. At an interpersonal level, the regulatory processes and emotional awareness associated with EI are expected to benefit a person's social relationships. Intra-personally, being aware of one's emotions can lead to regulating stress and negative emotions to perform better at work.

In a military context, De Beer and Van Heerden (2014) emphasise the importance of exploring the role of positive psychological constructs due to the changing times, diverse demographics and new demands of modern-day warfare. Bar-On (2010) posits that EI should be considered an integral part of positive psychology as it has a significant impact on human performance, happiness, well-being and the quest for meaning in life. Eggiman, Annen, and Proyer (2009) argue that the military is a perfect "home" for positive

psychology because it is composed of relatively young, healthy, and pathology-free individuals in whom their strongest qualities can be identified and nurtured. This proposition is supported by Cornum, Matthews, and Seligman (2011) who views positive psychology with its emphasis on positive states, traits, institutions and social relationships a “novel scientifically based approach” (p. 8), well suited for institutions such as the military.

#### **1.1.4 Emotional Intelligence**

EI, a term coined by Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004, p. 197), refers to “the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth”.

EI is rooted in a strong historical foundation, which originated beyond the Industrial and Organisational field (Dhani & Sharma, 2016). This allowed for various interpretations of the concept and therefore different theories exist within the EI domain. Leading authors have theoretically identified three main models of EI, namely, the ability model, mixed or trait model and the competency model (Gignac, 2010a; Gignac, 2010b; Khalili, 2012; Palmer, 2007). The ability model, developed by Mayer and Salovey (1993) conceptualised EI as based on mental abilities. Bar-on (2006) developed the mixed-model or trait EI, defining the construct as a range of socio-emotional traits. The competency model, which centres on Goleman's' theoretical underpinnings, is based on a theory of performance in the place of work (Van der Merwe, Coetzee, & de Beer, 2005).

Gignac (2008) introduced an additional model termed the Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Genos EI) which differs from other models since it does not incorporate dimensions of behaviour that are not directly relevant to the identification, use or management of emotions. It focuses on the measurement of typical behaviours through which an individual may exhibit emotionally intelligent behaviour.

The current study aims to contribute to the literature by exploring the differences between generations X and Y in the military through exploring whether being part of a particular generational cohort influences job satisfaction and EI.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The growing interest in understanding generational differences is evident in the body of research on the topic (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Curry, 2005; Gursoy et al., 2008; Lyons et al., 2013; Meriac et al., 2010; Reid, 2013; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge & Campbell, 2008, 2013). Given the reality of a multigenerational workforce, the imminent departure of older, skilled and knowledgeable workers, the shortage of highly-skilled employees, a war for talent and retention challenges, the impact of intergenerational dynamics deserves further research attention (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011; Reid, 2013; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010).

Limited research exists on generational differences in a South African context and in some cases, the research findings have yielded inconsistent and contradicting results (Close, 2015; Martins & Martins, 2014; Nkomo, 2013). Existing studies in the military context, both internationally and nationally, mainly focus on Gen Y and reflect definite differences between Gen Y and other generational groupings, namely Gen X and baby boomers (Drago 2006; Hyler 2013; Smith 2015).

Although discussions and findings commonly reflect a civilian perspective, the information is also applicable to organisations such as the military (Reid, 2013). It, however, is not advisable to simply generalise empirical results to the military industry. Since the military environment is unique and operates on specific protocols and doctrine, careful consideration should be given to how its workforce is studied (Reid, 2013).

The aspect of managing generational diversity may be particularly important in a military environment that is characterised by a singular culture requiring individuals to “fit in” and not to express their generational identities (Reid, 2013). Additional trends that are evident in a military environment include a very strict fraternisation policy that may deter the integration and mentorship of different cohorts in terms of the transfer of knowledge. Challenges experienced in the military include the recruitment and retention, especially of millennials (Drago, 2006). From an international perspective, Drago (2006) cites the change to an all-volunteer force as the reason, as attracting the right quality and quantity of volunteers has placed severe demands on the recruitment efforts of the military. Locally, Smith (2015) assigns the changing work values and preferences of the new millennial generation as a reason for the challenges in the recruitment and retention efforts of the



South African military. According to De Beer and Van Heerden (2014), the military context is and will remain a demanding one, and the unique demands posed in this environment will remain of research interest specifically with respect to attrition.

Millennials' dependence on technology posed a huge concern for the U.S. military when it became evident that junior officers used Facebook to organise their squadrons (Fritzson, Howell, & Zakheim, 2007). Such actions hold a significant threat for national security. The millennial generation's widespread, matter-of-fact adoption of hip-hop culture, including their sense of dress, body piercings and tattoos further conflicts with military regulations (Fritzson et al., 2007). Fritzson et al. (2007) therefore proposed research on the attitudes, aptitudes and habits of young military employees in order to assist in clarifying key areas of concern. Wong (2000) further believes that disparity exists between junior and senior officers in terms of generational differences.

Military management should understand that different generations are found in a military environment and that each has its own distinct, unique perceptions of work and motivational factors (Drago, 2006; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010, Wong, 2000). In South Africa, Smith (2015) describes millennials as viewing a military occupation as being risky, incompatible with their lifestyle or being too rigid and authoritative.

Generational trends such as the above suggest that employers not only have to understand older workers who make up the largest proportion of the workforce but also need to understand younger workers to prepare and support them for positions that they will fill in time (Fairlie, 2013). Twenge and Campbell (2008) contend that organisations and managers that understand deep-lying generational differences will be more successful in the long run, especially in harnessing the unique traits of various generations.

An interesting observation by Fairlie (2013) is that most research on generational differences only suggests minor differences among generations. Differences could also be attributed to age, which requires further research to clarify the nature of age and generational differences in the workplace, specifically as they relate to perceived differences in employee outcomes. Most literature further reflects an international perspective and research in a South African context appears to be limited. Nkomo (2013), for instance, points to a dearth of research within a South African context on the

integration of generational differences with various work outcomes such as sources of motivation, organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

As far as could be determined, Dhladhla's (2011) research is the only study on job satisfaction in the military reflecting a South African perspective. He developed a model suggesting that turnover intention results from a combination of organisation-related and job-related attitudes. Dhladhla (2011) determined that turnover intention in a military environment more strongly resulted from low levels of organisational commitment than from members' job satisfaction. These results contradict findings by Lumley et al. (2011), as well as Martin and Roodt (2008) who reported that job satisfaction and not levels of organisational commitment preceded turnover intentions. Dhladhla (2011) also found that members' levels of job satisfaction did not have a significant effect on their organisational commitment, in contrast to research that identified a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Lumley et al., 2011).

The relevance of exploring the construct of EI in the current study is supported by previous research that found that emotionally intelligent senior managers develop emotional attachment to their organisations and are more committed to their careers (Carmeli, 2003). Carmeli (2003) also linked EI to the development of positive work-related attitudes and found that emotionally intelligent senior managers tend to be more satisfied with their work. Research in the South African military found EI to be a predictor of work adjustment and leader success (Du Plessis, 2014; Grundlingh, 2012).

It is envisaged that the leadership of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) would be able to use the findings from the current study to craft effective organisational policies and processes to help maintain and retain a loyal and productive human resource pool working in cohesion despite underlying differences. The focus of the research was on the two youngest generations namely Gen X and Gen Y, since baby boomers in the military occupy very senior ranks, restricting access to an appropriate sample size. Due to the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of the military, it is not easy to gain access to high ranking members. Responses from only one portion of the baby boomer generational grouping who do not necessarily carry high ranks would not have given a true reflection of the whole generational grouping.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the background, motivation and problem statement, the following research questions were formulated:

- Is there a significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI in the military?
- Are there significant differences in overall job satisfaction between Gen X and Gen Y in the military?
- Are there significant differences in terms of job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Gen Y in the military?
- Are there significant differences in total EI between Gen X and Gen Y in the military?

### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The aim of the study is to determine the differences between generations X and Y in the military through exploring whether belonging to a particular generational cohort influences members' job satisfaction and EI. Based on the above, the following research hypotheses were empirically tested in this research:

### **1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The following research hypotheses were formulated and empirically tested:

H1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI and in the military.

H2: There is a statistically significant difference in overall job satisfaction between Gen X and Y in the military.

H3: There is a statistically significant difference in the job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Gen Y in the military.

H4: There is a statistically significant difference in total EI between Gen X and Gen Y in the military.

## **1.6 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **1.6.1 General aim of the study**

The general aim of the study was to explore the differences between generations X and Y in the military by exploring whether membership of a particular generational cohort influences members' job satisfaction and EI.

### **1.6.2 Specific aims of the study**

#### *1.6.2.1 Literature review*

The specific aims relating to the literature review are as follow:

- To conceptualise generational cohorts from the available literature.
- To conceptualise job satisfaction from the available literature.
- To conceptualise EI from the available literature.
- To present the theoretically conceptualised relationship between job satisfaction and EI.

#### *1.6.2.2 Empirical study aims*

The specific aims relating to the empirical study are formulated as follow:

- To determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI between Gen X and Y in the military.
- To determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in overall job satisfaction between generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military.
- To determine whether statistically significant differences exist in terms of job satisfaction facets between the different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military.
- To determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in total EI between different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military.

## **1.7 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE**

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2009) define paradigms as “all-encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their enquiry along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology” (p. 6). These

dimensions operate within three paradigms, namely positivist, interpretivist and constructionist. Babbie (2004) views a paradigm as the fundamental model or frame of reference used to organise observation and reasoning.

The current study was approached from a positivistic research paradigm since the study aimed to establish the existence of definite social facts, for example, generational differences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In the positivistic paradigm, objective measurements are used to explore specific variables in an objective and quantitative manner by means of statistical analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Durrheim & Painter, 2009; Louw, Mayer, & Baxter, 2012). It can thus be deduced that a positivist paradigm employs a quantitative methodology, and therefore numeric data in the current study were statistically analysed. The outcome of the analysis was then used to statistically determine the differences between the generational cohorts and establish the relationship between job satisfaction and EI. The research adopted a deductive (assumption), theory-driven approach as the researcher entered the field to collect data based on already preconceived theories and measures (Thomas, 2010).

### **1.7.1 Constructs of interest in the study**

#### *1.7.1.1 Generation*

A generation is defined as "a group of people or cohorts who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of critical factors" (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66).

#### *1.7.1.2 Job satisfaction*

Job satisfaction is defined as "the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" (Spector, 1997, p. 4).

#### *1.7.1.3 Emotional intelligence*

EI is defined as "the skill with which one perceives, expresses, reasons with and manages their own and others emotions" (Palmer, Gignac, Ekermans, & Stough, 2007, p. 60).

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Tredoux and Smith (2009) suggest that a research design can be thought of as a plan or protocol for a particular piece of research. The research design of a study defines the elements, their interrelationship and methods that constitute the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The following research design was employed in the study:

### **1.8.1 Research approach**

The study followed a quantitative research approach since the focus was on the quantification of certain constructs and the researcher had to measure these constructs. Quantitative research means that the raw data exist in numerical form and are analysed by means of statistical data analysis (Durrheim, 2009).

A non-experimental research design was used to explore the differences between groups and the relationships between the variables. Non-experimental research entails the observation of differences between groups and relationships between variables without controlling or manipulating them in any way (Babbie, 2004). A cross-sectional survey design was employed, and the Job Satisfaction Survey and the Genos EI served to measure the constructs within a work context. A cross-sectional design studies a phenomenon by taking a cross-section of it at a particular moment in time (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The object of the study was organisational groupings (particularly generational groups) with a specific focus on Gen X and Gen Y. The independent variable was generational groups while the dependent variables were job satisfaction and EI. In determining the relationship between job satisfaction and EI, there was no independent and dependent variable.

### **1.8.2 Research method**

#### *1.8.2.1 Research participants and sampling*

Babbie (2004) describes a population as a group about whom researchers want to draw conclusions. It is the larger pool from which a researcher's sampling pool is drawn

(Durrheim & Painter, 2009). The population of this research study comprised members of the SANDF, specifically within the HR fraternity.

The SANDF consists of four services namely the South African Army (SA Army), South African Navy (SAN), South African Air Force (SAAF), and the South African Medical Health Services (SAMHS) (Department of Defence, 2015). Data was collected from the HR Division (also known as the Personnel Corps) across the four services, rank groups and salary levels within the different service systems within the Gauteng area. The HR Division was selected due to its convenience and accessibility to the researcher. Experts caution against the use of available subjects, but they also acknowledge that it is justified when researchers are unable to use a probability sampling and when these limitations are made known to the reader (Babbie, 2004; Durrheim & Painter, 2009).

Sampling is the process of selecting research participants from a population and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and or social processes to observe (Babbie, 2004; Durrheim, 2009). A non-probability sampling technique was used for distributing the questionnaires. Durrheim and Painter (2009) define a non-probability sampling as “any kind of technique where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness” (p. 139).

#### *1.8.2.2 Ethical clearance*

Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the ethics committee of the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at UNISA and permission to conduct the research in the SANDF was obtained from Defence Intelligence. Questionnaires were distributed via field workers. Participants received a consent form and participant information leaflet that explained the purpose of the research, potential risks and discomfort, as well as potential benefits to participants and the organisation. The consent form and information leaflet also explained confidentiality measures, the voluntary nature of participating, information about the researcher's supervisor and the rights of participants.

Field workers were trained beforehand on the process to follow for the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. As part of the briefing, field workers had to agree to a confidentiality clause that outlined their responsibility for the safekeeping and

confidentiality of the completed questionnaires. Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed across the HR fraternity, consisting of rank-bearing officers and non-commissioned officers employed in the HR Division.

#### *1.8.2.3 Measuring instruments*

Quantitative research strives to present valid and reliable research findings (Durrheim & Painter, 2009). Reliability refers to the consistency of a study as well as of measures used. The researcher used well-established measuring instruments with proven validity and reliability indices. A questionnaire is considered reliable if the same result is obtained when the questionnaire is administered repeatedly (Durrheim & Painter, 2009). Validity refers to “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration” (Babbie, 2004, p. 122). The questionnaire was constructed as follows:

#### *Biographical information sheet*

A biographical information sheet was used to obtain non-identifying information about the gender, tenure and age of participants. This information was merely used to categorise respondents into generational cohorts and for descriptive purposes. To ensure anonymity, the biographical information sheet did not include unique identifiers such as participants' identity numbers, force numbers or names.

#### *Job satisfaction*

The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), developed by Spector (1985) was used to measure job satisfaction. The questionnaire has been validated as a reliable instrument to assess major dimensions of job satisfaction applicable specifically to human service, public and non-profit sector organisations (Spector, 1985). After analysing the literature on job dimensions, Spector (1985) created nine subscales to represent the job satisfaction domain. Reliability data for the total scale and subscales show reasonable internal consistency and the limited test-retest data indicated good reliability over time. Spector (1985) reported an overall Cronbach's alpha of .91 for the total scale with subscales ranging between .62 and .82. Spector (1985) furthermore reported a test-retest reliability of .71 for the entire scale.



More recently, Lumley et al., (2011) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92 for the total scale in a study undertaken at four information technology companies in South Africa.

### *Emotional intelligence*

EI was measured by means of the Genos EI, developed by Gignac (Gignac, 2010b; Palmer, Stough, Harmer, & Gignac, 2009).

Gignac (2010b) found very high levels of internal consistency reliability for the Genos total EI scale scores, namely scores of higher than .90 across five countries including South Africa with the subscales' score reliabilities at approximately .80. Gignac (2010b) however, cautioned against using the subscales for recruitment and selection purposes because the reliability ranged from .74 to .87 for the self-report questionnaire. In a sample of both black and white South African employees, Gignac and Ekermans (2010) found internal consistency reliabilities of the Genos EI to be approximately .94 for both black and white samples.

#### *1.8.2.4 Statistical analysis*

A combination of descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyse the data by means of IBM SPSS 24. A qualified statistician cleaned, analysed and interpreted the data.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the biographical characteristics and distribution of the different generational groups. According to Babbie (2004), descriptive statistics provide a method for presenting quantitative descriptions in a manageable form. This can be achieved by means of histograms and bar graphs, measures of central tendency, measures of variability and standard scores. The reliability levels of the two measuring instruments were determined by means of item analysis (Cronbach's alpha).

The correlation between the variables under investigation was determined by means of inferential statistics. Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated to indicate the strength and direction of the correlations between the JSS scales and EI for the whole group as well as for Gen X and Y separately. The alpha value for statistical significance was set at .05. Cohen's (1988) guidelines for the practical significance of correlations were used. A correlation value of .5 is regarded as large, .3 moderate, and .1 small (Cohen,

1988). An independent samples T-test was used to determine whether a difference exists between the means of the two generational groupings.

## **1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

The chapters are presented in the following manner.

### **Chapter 1: Scientific orientation to the research**

In this chapter, a scientific orientation to the research is provided by discussing the background to and motivation for the study, the problem statement and the research aims, the paradigm perspective, research design and research methods.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

The aim of this chapter is to review the relevant literature relating to generational theory, job satisfaction and EI. The constructs are discussed, with reference to their history, theoretical background, relevance in the military and findings from both an international and national perspective. The chapter concludes with findings on the relevant constructs both internationally and nationally within a military context.

### **Chapter 3: Research article**

This chapter is presented in the form of a research article which outlines the empirical procedure employed in the study. The empirical procedure will be explained in terms of the research participants, measurement instruments, research procedure and ethical consideration, statistical analysis and results.

### **Chapter 4: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations**

The conclusions drawn in terms of the specific aims of the research are presented in this chapter. The study's limitations and recommendations based on its findings are also explained.

## **1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, an overview of the scientific orientation to the research was provided, which contained the problem statement, the research aims, the paradigm perspective and the research design and research methods. The chapter concluded with the chapter layout for the succeeding chapters.

In chapter 2 a comprehensive literature review is provided on the constructs of generations, job satisfaction and EI in a military context. Specific findings linking the constructs from a national and international perspective are also presented.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW OF GENERATIONAL THEORY, JOB SATISFACTION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant literature relating to generational theory, job satisfaction and EI. Each construct will be presented, with reference to their history, theoretical background and relevance in the military. Literature on generational theory is firstly explored, followed by discussions on job satisfaction and EI. The chapter concludes with findings on the relevant constructs both internationally and nationally within a military context.

### **2.1 GENERATIONAL THEORY**

The concept of generations has a strong basis in sociological theory (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Karl Mannheim, a sociologist, is regarded as one of the main contributors to scholarly work on generations (McCourt, 2012). His 1923 essay on the “Problems of Generations” remains the basis for most analyses of the generational phenomenon (Lyons, 2003). Mannheim regarded the issue of generations as important enough to merit serious consideration. To him, generations formed one of the vital guides to an understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements (Lyons, 2003). He clarified the problem of generations by providing a theory of the nature and role of generations in social change (Lyons, 2003).

Mannheim saw generations as concrete social groups that are united through naturally-developed or consciously-willed ties within a social location. Individuals born in the same historical period and socio-cultural context, therefore, experience the same events and contexts during their formative years (Lyons, 2003). Although Mannheim acknowledged the influence of biological factors, he stressed the importance of social factors since he regarded biology as embedded within social and historical processes (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014). Without social interaction between human beings, the generation would not exist as a social phenomenon since there would merely be birth, ageing and death (Mannheim, 1952).

Mannheim's core claim was that generations developed as concrete domestic units, not generally as large scale, transnational movements. Generational units developed through specific shared experiences that combined with larger cultural traditions, identities and

institutions in which these generational units were embedded (Acuff, 2012). The actual shared experiences are not experienced or interpreted in the same way within the potential generational unit, but specific generational experiences are based on how close units are to the event/s. These experiences are largely formative for the young because people over the age of 30 have already crystallised their impressions of given events based on their own formative experiences (Acuff, 2012). Generational theory is based on the premise that commonly experienced life events have a stronger, more enduring effect on the "coming-of-age" cohort group than on other cohort groups who experienced the same events (Becton et al., 2014).

According to Kupperschmidt (2002), the assumption that these shared experiences inculcate relatively enduring values, attitudes, preferences and behaviours in a generational cohort, forming their worldviews is central to the theory of generations. It is through this internalised worldview that future political, social or work-related events are deciphered (Steele, 2012). According to Steele (2012), these worldviews are established through two mechanisms: firstly, the formative experience, anomaly or social moment that creates the generational cohort; secondly, a component of intense intergenerational struggle – sometimes termed "revolutionary" or "destructive". These events, which ultimately become the filter through which a generation interprets subsequent life experiences (Kupperschmidt, 2000), include shifts in society-wide attitudes, changes in social, economic and public policy as well as major events such as the end of apartheid in South Africa (Mattes, 2012) and the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States (US) (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Carlson (2012) postulated that early adult experiences shape individual worldviews and he used the World Value Survey as an insightful means of modelling and measuring how this shaping occurs. These surveys covered 97 societies representing about 90 percent of the world's population, allowing for a 40-year time-series analysis of selected societies. Examining the data of the World Values Survey by means of three different approaches – comparison of rich and poor countries, intra-country generational comparisons, and cross-national time-series evidence from the past two decades – Carlson (2012) found robust, extensive and compelling evidence of generational changes and value shifts.

Events or circumstances shape generations according to the particular phase of life its members occupy at the time (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Generations are shaped by similar

early-life experiences, often develop similar collective personae and follow similar life trajectories. Because of these patterns, it is possible to foresee how the generations alive today will think and act in decades to come. The time when a generation comes of age, for example during or after a period of national crisis or during a period of cultural renewal or awakening, will form the make-up of the generation (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Kupperschmidt (2000) pointed out that the multigenerational workforce brings different values and demands to the work context and if managers and co-workers do not sufficiently acknowledge this trend, it leads to tension and decreases in job satisfaction and productivity. Managers should create an environment in which employees serve as generational informants and resources for each other.

### **2.1.1 Generations in the workplace**

At least four main generational groupings are evident in the literature, depending on the time of publication (Reeves, 2006). Jurkiewicz and Brown (1998) mention the matures, baby boomers and generation X. Kupperschmidt (2000) identified three main generational groupings present in the workforce namely the traditional generation, baby boomers and generation X. Howe and Strauss (2007) identify six generations namely the GI generation, the silent generation, the boom generation, generation X, the millennial generation and the homeland generation. Most authors agree about the existence of four generations namely traditionalist, baby boomers, generation X and generation Y in the workplace (Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). The silent or veteran generation are, however, no longer active participants in the mainstream workforce (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008).

There appears to be a lack of consensus about the labelling of these generational groupings, as well as the age boundaries that divide the different generations (Reeves, 2006; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010), as evident in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1

<i>Differences in generational labels and cut-off dates</i>			
Authors	Generational label with alternative terms (also known as - aka) in brackets)	Birth period	
Cennamo and Gardner (2008)	<i>Baby boomers</i>	1946 - 1961	
	<i>Generation X</i> (aka thirteenth, baby busters, lost generation)	1962 – 1979	
	<i>Generation Y</i> (aka millennials, nexters, echo boomers)	1980 – 2000	
Gursoy et al. (2008)	Baby boomers	1944 – 1960	
	Generation X	1961 - 1980	
	Generation Y	1981 – 2000	
Howe and Strauss (2007)	Silent Generation (aka veterans, matures, traditionalist)	1925 – 1942	
	Baby boomers	1943 – 1960	
	Generation X	1961 – 1981	
	Generation Y	1982 – 2005	
Jurkiewicz and Brown (1998)	Matures	1925 - 1942	
	Baby boomers	1943 - 1960	
	Generation X	1961 – 1981	
	Generation Y	1979 – 1994	
Smola and Sutton (2002)	Baby boomers	1946 – 1964	
	Generation X	1960 – 1980	
	Generation Y	1979 – 1994	
Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance (2010)	Baby boomers	1946 – 1964	
	Generation X	1960 – 1980	
	Generation Y	1979 – 1994	

Source: Adapted from Parry and Urwin (2011, p.80)

A number of publications whether based on anecdotal or empirical, longitudinal or cross-sectional, quantitative or qualitative, international or national data, emerged that focused on the impact of generational differences in the workplace (Becton et al., 2014;

Comperatore & Nerone, 2008; Dickson, 2015; Reeves, 2006; Martins & Martins, 2014; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). The main assumption underlying these publications is that there are fundamental differences between the generational groupings, which have an impact on their work behaviours and which may impact organisational outcomes and attitudes (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge, 2010). These differences are now discussed according to each generational grouping.

#### *2.1.1.1 Silent generation/veterans/traditionalist/matures*

As mentioned earlier, the silent generation typically does not form part of the workforce anymore. Born during the period 1925 to 1942, and now aged 91 – 74, this generation has exited the world of work (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007). The silent generation was raised in the aftermath of tough economic times and influenced by the Great Depression and World War II (Tolbiz, 2008) and is presented in literature as hardworking, conforming and loyal workers (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They were likely to be stable, detail-oriented, thorough, loyal, and hardworking, although they might have been inept in situations of ambiguity and change, uncomfortable with conflict, and discreet during disagreements (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). They valued safe working conditions, job security and benefits and derived satisfaction from doing a job well. Their fundamental beliefs about work and meeting obligations were strengths that they brought to their work (Kupperschmidt, 2000). This generation will not be discussed further because of its lack of relevance to the current research.

#### *2.1.1.2 Baby boomers*

The largest single sustained surge of the population in the history of the US (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008), baby boomers (from now on referred to as boomers) are typically currently leaving organisations for retirement (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011; Twenge et al., 2010). Boomers grew up during times of economic and educational expansion and embraced the psychology of entitlement (Kupperschmidt, 2000). This generation is known as idealists, and they initiated and/or participated in civil right movements. Their exposure to political, religious and business leaders resulted in a loss of respect for and loyalty to authority and social institutions (Kupperschmidt, 2000).



The formative years of many of the boomers, now in leadership positions in numerous organisations, are characterised by protests against power (Tolbiz, 2008). This generation has an optimistic outlook, is driven and leads by consensus (Zemke et al., 2000). In a work context, boomers are characterised as workaholics and strong-willed employees, concerned about work content and material gain. They value promotions, titles, corner offices and reserved parking spaces (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They are experienced, gained a lot of expertise over time and would, therefore, like respect from younger generations. They would like to play a mentoring role, as it is important to them to share their successes and failures with the younger generations to prevent them from making the same mistakes (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008). This generation will not be discussed further as the current research focuses only on Generation X and Y.

#### *2.1.1.3 Generation X*

Generation X (Gen X) is frequently described as the children of first wave boomers. Family is very important to Gen X, and they, therefore, prefer jobs that can accommodate their families' needs. Gen X is very results- and goal-oriented and will get the work done, whether it is from home or the office (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008; Tolbize, 2008; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). This generation brings a number of strengths to the workplace, but they also face many challenges. Even though realistic with a practical approach to problem-solving, their resistance to authority may result in inappropriate behaviours that reflect negatively upon managers and peers (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Kupperschmidt, 2000). Zemke et al. (2000) view Gen Xers as being sceptical, but with a balanced work ethic, unimpressed with authority and leading with competence.

#### *Findings of studies involving Gen X*

Gen X is less likely to work overtime compared to boomers and millennials (Becton et al., 2014). Smola and Sutton (2000) found Gen X to be less loyal than boomers and that they would most likely leave the organisation if they found a better opportunity. In the South African context, Van der Walt and Du Plessis (2010) found that Gen X values flexible retirement options and freedom while they regard a fun work environment, flexible work schedules and acquiring new skills as most rewarding. Gen X regard perceived performance, recognition and career management as having the greatest impact on what

motivates employees, while boomers perceive variable pay as most impactful for staff motivation (Close, 2015).

#### *2.1.1.4 Generation Y*

Generation Y (hereafter referred to as Gen Y) is probably the generational grouping that has received the most research attention (Kaifi et al., 2012; Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). This generation typically originates from families where both parents have careers (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008). They consequently are very ambitious and have a constant need for success. Gen Y is hopeful and determined, polite toward authority, and has an inclusive relationship approach (Zemke et al., 2000). Kaifi et al. (2012) describe Gen Y as a dynamic force in the workforce and emerging as leaders considering the retirement of baby boomers. Gen Y is more confident, trusting and teachable in the workplace than their boomer and Gen X colleagues (Howe & Strauss, 2007). This generation has a greater need for work-life balance than generations before them (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008; Twenge, 2010; Twenge et al., 2010).

Gen Y values constant acknowledgement of their contribution at work. They are also very self-assured, and, even though they are aware that they have less experience, they will be impatient in terms of promotions (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008). As most Gen Yers are well-educated, they do not acknowledge gradually progressing up the career advancement ladder by seniority but want their skills and abilities to be taken into account during promotion decisions. If they feel that this is not the case, they will easily go somewhere else where they will get the job (Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). Gen Y further values development and wants to learn and expand their skills as much as they can, while still early in their careers.

#### *Findings of studies involving Gen Y*

In a review of empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes, Twenge (2010) found that Gen Y rates work as less central to their lives, values leisure more, and expresses a weaker work ethic than boomers. Gen Y rates extrinsic work values (e.g., salary) more highly and consistently scored higher on individualistic traits. In a time-lag study, Twenge et al. (2010) found that Gen X and especially Gen Y attach more value to

leisure time and place more value on work providing extrinsic rewards than boomers. Gen Y also values intrinsic and social rewards less than boomers. Twenge et al. (2010) found that the largest change in work values is the increased value attached to leisure. This finding supports the anecdotal, stereotyped and cross-sectional findings that Gen Y desires a work-life balance and supports the notion that leisure is a particularly salient work value for Gen Y relative to Gen X and boomers and Gen X relative to boomers (Twenge et al., 2010).

### **2.1.2 Generations in South Africa**

According to Deal et al. (2013), limited literature exists on the subject of generations in the UK, India and South Africa. Although a great deal of research on diversity management has been done in South Africa, research focusing on generational or age diversity is lacking (Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). Existing generational research in a South African context is fairly limited, compared to the vast body of international research in this field (Close, 2015).

Considering the underpinnings of cohort theory, it is impossible to describe people from different countries as being from the same generation although they were born in the same year because they have experienced different historical, economic and social shifts during their development. Although there are certain global trends, how they manifest vary because of the cultural, legal and economic conditions within a particular country (Deal et al., 2013). Close (2015) cautions that generational research in a South African context should be dealt with more circumspectly. Factors such as South Africans' political history, prevailing legislated redress, race relations and entrenched cultural diversity affect them, and may affect their preferences for reward, recognition and motivation more than generational differences.

Mattes (2012) identifies five potentially-distinct political generations in post-apartheid South Africa. Each generation is associated with an era characterised internally by continuity in social, economic and political trends, but is demarcated by a major historical disjuncture that sharply distinguishes it from surrounding cohorts. Deal et al. (2013) point out that generational descriptions in South Africa do not necessarily apply to all racial groups as the same social and political events affected these different populations differently.

Mattes' (2012) paper on attitudes toward democracy across generations in South Africa is one of the few sources in literature discussing generational groupings in a South African context. These groupings are characterised as follows.

#### *2.1.2.1 Pre-apartheid generation*

Members of this generation, the oldest and smallest in South Africa, reached their politically formative years before the historic victory of the National Party in the 1948 election and the imposition of the system of official race classifications and segregation.

#### *2.1.2.2 The apartheid generation (born 1938-1960)*

Mattes (2011) divided the apartheid generation into two groupings namely the Early Apartheid generation and the Grand Apartheid generation.

##### *The Early apartheid generation*

This group comprises of people who turned 16 between 1948 and 1960, resulting in their not having a working memory of life before the rise of the National Party and the imposition of "petty" apartheid, or the legal matrix of laws imposing and enforcing racial classification and separation.

##### *Grand apartheid generation*

This generation consists of those citizens whose early memories include the stirring of internal black resistance such as the marches that led to the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, as well as foreign news of increasing decolonisation and even Kenya's Mau-Mau rebellion. Yet this generation's memories of late adolescence and early adulthood also carry the recollection of the post-Sharpeville reaction of the National Party government, banning virtually all black political movements and imprisoning a whole generation of leaders, the most prominent being Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo.

Further relevant events include separate development through the Bantustan system, but also a rapid growth and industrialisation in South Africa that saw a significant increase in African incomes (Deal et al., 2013).

#### *2.1.2.3 Struggle generation (born 1961–80)*

This generation consists of people who turned 16 between 1976 and 1966 and observed several important events, such as the first television broadcast, allowing first-hand coverage of the uprisings. According to Deal et al. (2013), the struggle generation would not be an accurate label for most whites born during this period. This era was characterised by violent resistance and reaction (Mattes, 2012). During the 1970s and 1980s, military and economic sanctions against the apartheid regime lead to reduced economic growth, investment by corporations and exportation of goods. Members of all race groups in this generation would have felt the impact of the economic sanctions (Deal et al., 2013).

#### *2.1.2.4 Transition generation (born 1981-93)*

The transition generation, as coined by Deal et al. (2013), likely knew about apartheid-related violence during their childhood, but entered adolescence into a reformed and democratic system. They came of age in a system without legal restrictions in respect of where to sit in a bus or whom they can marry. They grew into adulthood during the apartheid regime and as adults live in a South Africa where race-based legally enforced segregation has been replaced by class segregation. This generation appears to be less accepting of (and willing to comply with) authority than earlier generations (Deal et al., 2013).

#### *2.1.2.5 The born free generation (born 1994-2000)*

According to Mattes (2012), the real change in attitude should be most visible in those young people who came of age politically after 1996. Deal et al. (2013) agree that the end of apartheid is the one life event that probably had a significant effect on cultural and social identities in South Africa.

The born-frees moved through the ages of 16, 17 and 18 in 1997 and entered the political arena with little first-hand experience of the preceding turmoil. Their first political experience, possibly casting a vote in the 1999 election, was with a relatively normal, though clearly reform-minded democratic political system (Maswili, 2014).

In many ways, the born-frees experience a completely different world than that of their parents. There are no official limits to where they may go, work or live, or whom they may date or marry. They have experienced a series of peaceful democratic elections that increasingly emphasise new issues and personalities with diminishing links to the past. Table 2.2 below outlines the most significant cohort forming events in America and South Africa.

Table 2.2

<i>Cohort forming events in America and South Africa</i>			
	America		South Africa
Boomers	Civil Rights and Women's movements	Apartheid generation	Legal Matrix of laws imposing and enforcing racial separation
	Vietnam War		Sharpeville Massacre
	Assassination of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King		Mass imprisonment of black leaders
Gen X	AIDS epidemic	Struggle generation	Soweto Uprising
	Economic uncertainty		Increasingly violent protests against apartheid
	Fall of the Soviet Union		
	Divorce and job loss of parents		Economic and military sanctions
			First television broadcast
Gen Y	Watched collapsed of several iconic companies due to unethical leadership, e.g. Enron, TYCO, Arthur Andersen	Transition Generation	Exposed to democratic political processes
	"Wired" since very young		Broad range of international news and TV shows
	Growing up with the internet made them accustomed to getting access to information quickly		Class segregation

Source: Adapted from Deal et al. (2013); Mattes (2012); Twenge et al. (2010)

### 2.1.3 Criticism of generational theory

Generational theory has received considerable criticism ranging from its conceptualisation to the research design used to measure the phenomenon.

Becton et al. (2014) cite three reasons for the criticism of generational theory:

1. Empirical support for the associated values for each generation is lacking and are merely presented as stereotypes for which limited empirical support exists. Research does not fully support the assumptions of generational theory (Giancola, 2006).
2. Little to no evidence exists that links important events experienced by generational cohort groups and their stereotypical values or characteristics.
3. The presented generational stereotypes are associated with Western culture.

Reeves (2006) further highlights the non-standardisation of the labels used for the different groupings as well as the disagreement among authors about the cut-off dates that determine any one generation as limitations. The existence of Generation “Jones” also referred to as “cuspers” further complicates matters. These people born, on the edges of the various generational spans, further limit the generalisation of generational traits to individuals based on their particular generational categorisation (Giancola, 2006; Reeves, 2006; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010).

Levenson (2009) examined generational phenomena from an economic perspective, particularly focusing on how Gen Y differs from generations before them. He found that differences among generations indeed exist but that they may be attributable to life cycle differences and not necessarily the generational cohort to which people belong. This finding supports Giancola’s (2006) argument that the characteristics of generations can be attributed more to life stages than to generational differences. Although generations are different, these differences do not necessarily mean that they hold divisive values and attitudes that will affect their ability to work well together. Giancola (2006) could not find supporting evidence in independent sources that generational differences exist and believes the idea is more of a myth than a reality. Levenson (2009) further points to insufficient evidence confirming Gen Y to be fundamentally different from their predecessors, when considering predictable life cycle stages as well.

There may be a theoretical basis for the notion that generational differences exist but, currently, little empirical evidence exists for the assertion and findings on work values are, at best, mixed (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Many studies do not find support for the predicted differences in work values and those that do, often fail to distinguish between generations and age as possible reasons for the observed differences. Twenge (2010) admits to the weaknesses of cross-sectional research designs in terms of generational research. The most logical explanation for the misalignment of results in terms of cross-sectional research may be that the studies probably also tap into differences resulting from age or career stages.

Parry and Urwin (2011) also found that the terms, generations and cohorts, are often used interchangeably although they are not the same. According to these authors, a cohort is a much simpler and more a theoretical grouping than a generation.

Twenge (2010), however, advises that generational labels should not be abandoned since they provide useful shorthand descriptions for the different current generational groupings and those still to develop. Although findings are somewhat conflicting, it appears that small to moderate differences exist between the generations in the workforce and that controlling for age and time-period variables may provide even stronger results (Reeves, 2006; Twenge, 2010).

#### **2.1.4 Generational differences in the military**

Much of the literature consulted for the purposes of this study that deal with generational differences in the military was from an international perspective, and members of the armed forces themselves did some of the studies (Drago, 2006; Hyler 2013; Stafford & Griffis, 2008; Wong, 2000). Many of these studies also focused on either a single or only two generations, depending on the time of publication. A common theme across these studies is that different generations, especially Gen Y, might require the military to develop targeted policies for attracting, retaining, and effectively developing them (Hyler, 2013; Wilcox, 2001).

Many volunteers, in this case, Gen Y, regard a career in the military as an opportunity to accomplish personal growth, achieve educational goals, develop technical and leadership skills and fulfil their personal career aspirations (Hyler, 2013; Smith, 2015). Very few



civilian employers offer their employees the encompassing range of economic and social benefits including job security, housing and housing allowances and full medical and dental benefits found in the military (Smith, 2015).

According to Hyler (2013), attracting the most talented, motivated Gen Y members, however, is not an easy task. Young adults look more toward the military for healthcare benefits, training, an income, job stability and signing bonuses. Hyler (2013) believes that Gen Y is quite unique compared to previous generations and that a thorough understanding of possible differences may assist in effectively recruiting and developing members of this generation.

Triscari (2002) and Wong (2000) found clear differences in the work values of boomers and Gen X. Wong (2000) believes that a misalignment exists between junior and senior officers in terms of understanding different perspectives across generational groupings. Triscari (2002) uses the analogy of two computers passing information from one terminal to another for explaining the differences in communication between generations that may lead to misunderstanding. The ability to understand and connect with the different generations can be a vital function for retaining soldiers in future (Hyler, 2013; Triscari, 2002).

According to Wong (2000), boomers in the military work relentlessly in pursuit of goals, often at the expense of their marriages, family and personal lives because their parents doted on them and viewed them as the generation that would change the world. Gen X on the other hand, arrived on the scene unnoticed and had to fend for themselves. They learned to rely on themselves and developed confidence, often misinterpreted as arrogance. They are a valuable commodity and very hard to replace. To the boomer generation, taking care of families involves having state-of-the-art daycare facilities for their children; to Gen X, taking care of families involves time to nurture relationships with their children and spouses (Wong, 2000).

Hyler (2013) found that parents had the strongest influence on the decision-making of Gen Y. He attributes this finding to the fact that parents who are more involved and willing to make large sacrifices provide their children with the necessary opportunities and tend to set high expectations and standards for achievement. The main reasons that Gen Y

provided for possibly considering military service as a job option were extrinsic, tangible benefits such as educational opportunities, travel and pay.

Hylar (2013) further identified the following features that may attract Gen Y to the military: 1) extrinsic, tangible benefits including money for college, the opportunity to travel, pay and health benefits, job security, and retirement benefits; and (2) intrinsic, intangible benefits such as duty and service to country, self-discipline and leadership development and challenge.

In summary, three generations, namely the baby boomers, generation X and generation Y mainly constitute the current workforce. Despite receiving considerable criticism ranging from the conceptualisation to the measurement of generations, some studies have confirmed the existence of differences among generations, especially when controlling for age and time-period variables.

## **2.2 JOB SATISFACTION**

The topic of employee job satisfaction has received considerable attention from both researchers and practitioners (Spector, 1985). Job satisfaction and its effects are the results of complex interactions between individuals and organisations (Spector, 1985). The construct is regarded as an attitude (Spector, 1997; Weiss & Merlo, 2015) and its attitudinal nature implies that an individual would tend to approach or stay in a satisfying job and avoid or quit from a dissatisfying job (Spector, 1985).

Judge and Klinger's (2008) description of job satisfaction highlights its importance, namely that it is "a salient and deep-seated attitude that permeates cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of people's work and non-work lives" (p. 407). Employees have attitudes or viewpoints about many aspects of their jobs, careers and their organisations but the main employee attitude is job satisfaction (Saari & Judge, 2004). According to Weiss and Merlo (2015) researchers can either focus on the evaluation of overall job satisfaction or a specific aspect called facet satisfaction. The difference between overall satisfaction, satisfaction with one's job as a whole, and facet satisfactions (expressed satisfaction with the aspects of one's job, e.g., pay, supervision and the work one does) simply relate to the differences in the object of evaluation (Weiss & Merlo, 2015). Facet job satisfaction reflects an individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with specific components

of the job, such as pay and benefits, scheduling, co-worker interactions, praise and recognition, professional opportunities, autonomy and responsibility (Wilson et al., 2008). When researchers are focusing on the evaluation of the totality of a job, they are referring to overall job satisfaction. When they focus on the evaluation of a specific aspect of job experience, they are referring to facet satisfaction (Weiss & Merlo, 2015).

Job satisfaction is a frequently studied variable in organisational behaviour research, as well as a central variable in both research and theory of organisational phenomena (Martin & Roodt, 2008). Mafini (2014) believes that the job satisfaction construct merits continued empirical research in order to obtain new information, in a specific context, to augment and update existing knowledge about the construct. Job satisfaction is one of the most important and well-researched areas of study and a work outcome that should be not be taken for granted if organisations aim to achieve success (Daud, 2016).

### 2.2.1 Definitions of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction as a concept has been defined in many ways (Judge & Klinger, 2008). Table 2.3 outlines the most frequently used definitions in academic literature.

Table 2.3

#### *Various definitions of job satisfaction*

Author	Definition
Kalleberg (1977, p. 126)	"an overall affective orientation on the part of individuals toward work roles which they are presently occupying".
Locke (1969, p. 316)	"the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values".
Spector (1997, p. 4)	"the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs".
Weiss and Merlo (2015, p. 833)	"a positive or negative evaluation one makes about one's job or job situation".
Wilson et al., (2008, p. 717)	"global job satisfaction refers to an individual's overall feelings about the job and derives from

## **2.2.2 Approaches to job satisfaction**

According to Weiss and Merlo (2015), job satisfaction theories can be positioned within four broad categories namely the cognitive judgement approach, social influence theories, dispositional theories and affect theories.

### *2.2.2.1 Cognitive judgement approaches*

According to cognitive judgement theories, the work environment consists of a set of concrete, discrete or abstract features and workers evaluate the features or outcome of the features against a corresponding set of standards. Perceptions are then matched to standards to yield facet satisfaction or overall satisfaction. The Value-Percept Theory is the most notable theory resorting under this approach (Weiss & Merlo, 2015).

### *2.2.2.2 Social influence approaches*

This approach emphasises the role of the social environment in influencing judgements about work (Weiss & Merlo, 2015). Employees are able to create their own satisfaction by selectively perceiving and interpreting their social environment and their own past actions (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The most prominent theories that resort under this approach are the Job Characteristic Model and Social-Information Processing Model (Weiss & Merlo, 2015).

### *2.2.2.3 Dispositional approaches*

Dispositional approaches are based on the idea that job satisfaction is rooted in the personality make-up of the individual and focus on personality characteristics as influences on satisfaction (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Weiss & Merlo, 2015). It is believed that a person's job satisfaction to some degree "reflects his or her general tendency to feel good or bad about all aspects of life and this general tendency is independent of the specific nature of the job" (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p.7). Evidence for this type of approach is that satisfaction tends to remain stable across time and jobs and that satisfaction tends to correlate with established personality constructs (Weiss & Merlo, 2015). The most notable

theoretical position embedded in this approach is Core Self-Evaluations theory (Weiss & Merlo, 2015).

#### *2.2.2.4 Affect Approach*

Weiss and Merlo (2015) highlight a renewed interest in affective states such as moods and emotions in the theoretical domain of job satisfaction. An important theoretical position in this domain is the AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which attempts to clarify key concepts in satisfaction and affect research.

In particular, the AET distinguishes between satisfaction, as a relatively stable attitudinal evaluation of one's job, and moods and emotions as transient affective experiences (Weiss, 2002), and it explains how discrete affective experiences influence overall judgements such as satisfaction. This theoretical position distinguishes between affect-driven behaviours (criteria driven by immediate affective states like moods and emotions) and judgement-driven behaviours (criteria driven by evaluative judgements such as satisfaction). These distinctions between affect and attitude are well-accepted and their interrelationships represent a productive area of research, according to Weiss and Merlo (2015).

### **2.2.3 Theories on job satisfaction**

An array of theoretical positions on job satisfaction exists. A few of the more prominent theories on job satisfaction are briefly discussed below.

#### *2.2.3.1 Two-Factor Theory of Job Satisfaction*

Herzberg (1959, cited in Stello, 2012, p. 3) introduced the two-factor theory of job satisfaction. It states that two different sets of factors affect job satisfaction and dissatisfaction and they consequently cannot be measured on the same continuum. Factors that affect job satisfaction resort under two categories namely hygiene factors or extrinsic motivators, surrounding the doing of the job and motivation factors that lead to positive job attitudes because they satisfy the need for self-actualisation. Hygiene factors include supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, company policy and administration, benefits, and job security, while motivation factors or intrinsic

motivators are achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

#### *2.2.3.2 Expectancy theory*

The expectancy theory posits that employee job performance is a function of motivation and ability (Vroom, 1964). Performance is thus based on individual factors such as skills and abilities. Vroom's expectancy theory differs from the content theories of, for example, Maslow and Herzberg, since Vroom's expectancy theory does not provide specific suggestions on what motivates organisational members. Instead, it provides a process of cognitive variables that reflect individual differences in work motivation (Lunenburg, 2011).

#### *2.2.3.3 Value-percept theory*

According to Locke (1969), satisfaction results from value achievement and satisfaction and dissatisfaction are emotions. Locke (1969) developed the Value-Percept Theory and argued that individuals would determine what satisfied them in their jobs. Only unfulfilled job values that were important to the individual would be dissatisfying. This model expresses job satisfaction in terms of employees' values and job outcomes (Judge & Klinger, 2008). To fully account for the effects of value achievement on job satisfaction, the individual's job values and value conflicts need to be studied.

#### *2.2.3.4 Job characteristics model*

Hackman and Oldham (1976) proposed a model that specifies the conditions under which individuals will become internally motivated to perform their jobs effectively. The model focuses on the interaction among three classes of variables: (1) employees' psychological states that have to be present for internally motivated work behaviour to develop; (2) the characteristics of jobs that may create these psychological states; and (3) individual attributes that determine how positively a person will respond to a complex and challenging job.

#### *2.2.3.5 Social information processing*

The social-information processing approach to job satisfaction was introduced in 1978 (Weiss & Merlo, 2015). This approach is based on the premise that individuals are adaptive organisms who will adapt their attitudes, behaviour and beliefs to their social

context and to the reality of their own past and present behaviour and situation. The theory holds that workers are able to construct their own satisfaction by selectively perceiving and interpreting their social environment and their own past actions (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

#### *2.2.3.6 Affective events theory*

During the 1990s, there was an increased interest in affective states such as moods and emotions, which broadened the thinking about job satisfaction and provided for more precise discussions on the topic. These discussions included efforts to further clarify the construct of job satisfaction and to position it as an attitude or evaluative judgement, influenced by, but not equivalent to affective states (Weiss & Merlo, 2015).

Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) presented the Affective Events Theory (AET) that focuses on the structure, causes and consequences of affective experiences at work. Different emotions and moods have different behavioural implications. Affective experiences at work, therefore, may influence a person's evaluative judgement about their job. The theory particularly focuses on events as proximal causes of affective reactions, which have a direct influence on behaviours and attitudes.

The AET considers the structure of affective reactions as equally important to the structure of environments. This is based on the premise that affect in itself is multidimensional, and it emphasises the importance of the structure of psychological experience. In particular, it distinguishes between satisfaction, as a relatively stable attitudinal evaluation of one's job, and moods and emotions as transient affective experiences (Weiss, 2002), and it explains how discrete affective experiences influence overall judgements such as satisfaction.

In the following section, job satisfaction within a military context is discussed.

#### **2.2.4 Challenges in the military that may impede or decrease job satisfaction**

Employment in the armed forces entails more than just an occupational choice (Department of Defence, 2015). One chooses a lifestyle that permeates almost every aspect of a person's life. A military member must always be ready and available to defend their country, accept the possibility of hazardous assignments including the possibility of injury, captivity or even death. These possibilities exist during both wartime and peacekeeping assignments. A career in the military requires both mental and physical

training to ensure a well-balanced soldier that is ready to take on any task, at any time (Cornum et al., 2011; De Beer & Van Heerden, 2014; Rashid & Sultan, 2013).

Military personnel experience various types of challenges including maintaining their motivation levels, maintaining good psychological health, avoiding burnout and occupational stress and maintaining their job satisfaction levels (Mohd Bokti & Abu Talib, 2009). Being responsible for the safeguarding of a country may cause emotional problems due to the conflict between human psychosocial needs and expectations related to the responsibility to serve the nation. War and violence may break out anytime without any warning, and it is thus important that troops are always physically and mentally ready. Military organisations therefore obviously would demand that their personnel possess a high level of psychological health and fitness (Cornum et al., 2011; Department of Defence, 2015; Koopman & Van Dyk, 2012; Mohd Bokti & Abu Talib, 2009).

Military culture further is authoritarian (Ditsela, 2012), often justifying exclusionary policies based on the grounds of preserving combat effectiveness and expecting sacrifice of self for the greater good, resulting in time away from family and friends (Smith, 2015). Because of their mandate, soldiers are very restricted in terms of rights that are taken for granted in the labour market such as the right to life, the right to strike and even negotiating on labour issues such as salary, promotions and working conditions (Ditsela, 2012). The bureaucratic structure and ranking system in the military demand obedience to order and restricts creativity and expression of one's own views. According to Abrahams (2007), rank and regulation may distance army leaders from their subordinates to such an extent that candid feedback essential for organisational effectiveness does not take place. The bureaucracy is seen as a way to instil military discipline and loyalty but could cause dissatisfaction (Ditsela, 2012).

Few civilian occupations require the same level of commitment and dedication from their employees as in the military (Bartone, 2006; Department of Defence, 2015). Even during times of peace, military jobs often entail long and irregular working hours, frequent periods away from home and uncomfortable working conditions (Ditsela, 2012; Kamphuis et al., 2012). The military, therefore, requires a high degree of institutional commitment, where individual needs are subservient to those of the military (Ditsela, 2012; Grundlingh, 2012; Smith, 2015). Furthermore, the military is an organisation where task performance comes at a high cost as it draws on the physical and psychological resources of soldiers, and



deployments and training courses sometimes drive soldiers away from natural support structures such as their family (De Beer & Van Heerden, 2014; Ditsela, 2012). Due to the high level of mental and physical training required in the military, an understanding of human nature and human capabilities is essential in this context (Mohd Bokti & Abu Talib, 2009).

Very limited, published empirical research exists on job satisfaction in the military. Abedi and Mazuree (2010) examined individual factors among military personnel and how these related to their job satisfaction based on Vroom's expectancy theory. They found significant differences between the level of satisfaction and level of education among soldiers. Soldiers with a lower level of education reflected a higher level of job satisfaction. Abedi and Mazuree (2010) attributed these results to the fact that as soldiers' work experience increases, they are no longer satisfied with what they have because their expectations have also increased. Contrary to the above, Rashid and Sultan (2013) found that well-educated officers had higher job satisfaction levels compared to those who were less educated.

Mohd Bokti and Abu Talib (2009) found that the majority of military personnel reported a moderate level of job satisfaction. Some respondents reported dissatisfaction with the operation procedures, particularly in terms of rules, too much paperwork and work overload as well as red tape, which interfered with executing their work tasks.

### **2.2.5 Job satisfaction and generational differences**

The outcomes of studies relating to job satisfaction and the different generations both from an international and local perspective will now be discussed.

#### ***2.2.5.1 International studies***

Wilson et al. (2008) found significant differences in overall job satisfaction in boomer, Gen X and Gen Y hospital nurses. Boomers were significantly more satisfied with their jobs than Gen X and Y, and no significant differences were found between Gen X and Y nurses in terms of overall job satisfaction or any component of job satisfaction. Benson and Brown (2011) also found boomers to be significantly more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to quit than Gen X. These differences persisted after controlling for a range of variables including age, pointing to strong evidence for a generational effect.

To and Tam (2014) tested the socialisation hypothesis stating that individuals' basic values are largely fixed during the formative years of childhood and adolescence, and those values remain relatively stable throughout their lifetimes. They found that both boomers and Gen X possessed a higher level of job satisfaction than Gen Y.

Using a data analysis technique that controls for the confounding effects of age and time period to make more accurate inferences about generational effects, Kowske et al. (2010) found that Gen X had higher levels of overall company and job satisfaction, satisfaction with job security, recognition and career development and advancement than boomers and Gen Y.

Investigating the facets of job satisfaction of boomers and Gen X, Curry (2005) found that extrinsic job factors such as work-family balance and supervision as well as intrinsic job factors such as the job itself predicted overall job satisfaction in Gen X. Boomers' overall job satisfaction was predicted by the intrinsic job factor, recognition and the extrinsic job factor, supervision. No significant differences were found between the groups in terms of overall job satisfaction (Curry, 2005). The types of job facet and the amount of variance that they explained in overall job satisfaction differed between the two groups. This suggests that overall satisfaction was influenced by a discreet combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors for each group (Curry, 2005). To and Tam (2014) found that for Gen Y, social job rewards were positively associated with job satisfaction, while for Gen X, all the extrinsic, social, and intrinsic rewards were positively associated with job satisfaction. For boomers, both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards were positively associated with job satisfaction.

#### *2.2.5.2 South African perspective*

There is a shortage of studies on generations within in a South African context. Nkomo (2013) identified a positive relationship between age (cohort membership) and job satisfaction. Boomers had higher job satisfaction than both Gen X and Y, and Gen X had higher job satisfaction than Gen Y. Martins and Martins (2014) concluded that the satisfaction levels among boomers, Gen X and Gen Y corresponded quite closely and that Gen Y wanted many of the same things from work as the generations before them.

Masibigiri and Nienaber (2011) found that Gen Xers in the public service were inclined to leave their organisations when dissatisfied. Masibigiri and Nienaber (2011) further emphasise the importance of retaining Gen X employees because they constitute human capital repositories of knowledge, skills and expertise and ensure good performance. Robyn and Du Preez (2013) found that improving job satisfaction among Gen Y academics is important for the continued growth of higher education institutions in South Africa. They found that if academics were more satisfied with their positions, they exhibit lower intentions to quit.

As far as could be determined, in the only South African study investigating generational differences in the military, Smith (2015) found Gen Y to be dissatisfied with the “command and comply” culture of the military.

In summary, it is evident that research on the job satisfaction construct has remained relevant since 1930 and is of considerable interest to researchers in explaining organisational phenomena. Considering the positive relationship between job satisfaction and multiple desired outcome variables, promoting higher job satisfaction may be advantageous for both employers and employees (Dickson, 2015). More recently, affective experiences such as moods and emotions have also contributed to the theoretical domain of job satisfaction and will likely receive further research attention in the future (Weiss & Merlo, 2015).

## **2.3 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

The role of emotions in organisations has always been important but was ignored due to the notion that business should not mix with emotions (Kohli, 2017). Gryn (2015) highlighted that emotions are important in the work context. Andries (2011) is of the opinion that emotional experiences shape and influence decision-making, communication abilities, networking abilities and work style. The organisation in which people work affects their thoughts, feelings and actions in the workplace and away from it and reciprocally people's thoughts, feelings, and actions affect the organisations in which they work (Brief & Weiss, 2002).

It appears that positive affect generally leads to people being gracious, generous and kind to others; being socially responsible and more considerate of others' perspectives (while

not losing sight of their own perspective) (Isen, 2001). Hu and Kaplan (2015) agreed and further argued that emotional experiences of employees continuously revise job attitudes.

EI as an emerging paradigm has generated considerable interest within the domain of organisational behaviour and its effect on various work outcomes. The following sections deal with the history and background of EI.

### **2.3.1 The history of EI**

EI started its journey to prominence in 1920 when Thorndike formulated the concept of social intelligence, which referred to the ability to understand and manage people in human relations. In 1983, Gardner (as cited in Bar-on, 2006, p. 14) developed the theory of multiple intelligences that classified social intelligence into two categories, namely, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence.

In 1990, Salovey and Mayer coined the term, EI, which they conceptualised as the subset of social intelligence that involved the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions and distinguish among them and use the information to guide one's thinking and action. Mayer, Salovey, Caruso and Sitarenio (2001) argue that EI corresponds quite closely to traditional intelligence.

Goleman (1995) contributed to the theory of EI with his book *Emotional Intelligence*. Goleman's theory differed from existing models since it focused on EI in the work context and its relation to job performance (Van der Merwe et al., 2005). Goleman (1995) therefore believes that social and emotional competencies are crucial to outstanding job performance.

Bar-On (1996, cited in Van der Merwe et al., 2005, p. 35) investigated EI from a competency model perspective, and stresses the importance of emotional expression. Bar-On (2006) views the outcome of emotionally and socially intelligent behaviour in terms of effective and successful adaptation. According to Bar-On (2006), the factorial component of non-cognitive intelligence resembles personality factors. His model is also related to performance in the sense that it relates to potential for performance rather than performance itself.

Khalili (2012) differentiates between the different approaches to EI and points out that Mayer and Salovey focused on the relevance between emotion and cognition, Bar-On concentrated upon EI's influences on performance and well-being and Goleman concentrated on EI as a competency model.

Based on the theoretical contribution of the above-mentioned proponents, three models of EI can be identified.

### **2.3.2 Models of EI**

EI models can be categorised according to three main theoretical approaches, namely ability, trait and competency models (Palmer et al., 2007). These models and the measures based on them are discussed below.

#### *2.3.2.1 Ability Model*

Within the parameters of the ability model, EI is defined as a conceptually-related set of mental abilities related to emotions and the processing of emotional information (Palmer, 2007). This model was developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) who define EI as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the "ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and then use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). According to Khalili (2012), the ability model is based on the theoretical position that intelligence guides emotions.

EI played a role within the traditions of the intelligence field, and intelligence researchers often examined people's specific intelligences within sub-areas such as social behaviour and occasionally emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). EI does not include the general sense of self and appraisal of others but rather focuses on the recognition and use of one's own and others' emotional states to solve problems and regulate behaviour. Salovey and Mayer (1990) recognise a set of conceptually-related mental processes involving emotional information which include: 1) appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others; 2) regulating emotion in the self and others; and 3) using emotions in adaptive ways.

The ability model originates from the idea that emotions contain information about relationships. When a person's relationship with another person or object changes their

emotions toward that person or object also change. A person who is perceived as threatening is feared and an object that is favoured is liked. Irrespective of whether these relationships are actual, remembered or even imaginary, they are accompanied by felt signals called emotions (Mayer et al., 2001). According to Mayer et al. (2001), EI, therefore, refers to an “ability to recognise the meanings of emotions and their relationships and to use them as biases in reasoning and problem-solving” (p. 234). Mayer et al. (2001) divide EI into four areas of skills, which they term branches. These four branches divide EI into four areas, namely accuracy in perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions and managing emotions in a way that enhances personal growth and social relations. These "branches" illustrate that the abilities are arranged in a hierarchical order from the least psychologically complex to the most psychologically complex (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2006). The four branches are described in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4

*Overview of the four-branch model of emotional intelligence*

Branch	Description of measure	Summary
4: Managing emotion	Ability to manage emotions and emotional relationships for personal and interpersonal growth	The ability to manage emotions in yourself and in others.
3: Understanding emotion	Ability to comprehend emotional information about relationships, transitions from one emotion to another, linguistic information about emotions	The ability to understand complex emotions and emotional “chains,” and how emotions transition from one stage to another.
2: Facilitating thought with emotion	Ability to harness emotional information and directionality to enhance thinking	The ability to generate emotion, and then reason with this emotion.
1: Perceiving emotion	Ability to identify emotions in faces and pictures	The ability to recognise how you and those around you are feeling.

Source: Adapted from Mayer et al., (2001, p. 235); Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2006, p. 2)

## *Measures*

Ability-based models of EI represent a relatively homogeneous set of emotionally relevant abilities, generally considered measurable by psychometric tests (Gignac, 2010a). Ability EI involves emotion-related cognitive abilities that should be assessed via maximum performance tests (Psilopanagloti et al., 2012). These measures comprise of a series of questions to which there are more or less correct answers and are purported to index individual differences in people's actual emotional abilities (Psilopanagloti et al., 2012). The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test serves as an example of an ability-based EI measure (Gignac, 2010a). It requires respondents to solve problems about emotions, or problems that require the use of emotions (Mayer et al., 2006).

### *2.3.2.2 Trait models*

Trait models, also known as mixed models, define EI as an array of socio-emotional traits such as assertiveness (Palmer, 2007). This model of EI was developed by Bar-On and is based on the assumption that EI depends on both cognition and a socio-emotion centred in personality traits (Khalili, 2012). The trait model is process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented (Van der Merwe et al., 2005).

Bar-On (1997) defined the concept of EI as "an array of personal, emotional and social competencies and skills that influences one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 14). According to De Weerdts and Rossi (2012), Bar-On's theoretical approach to EI presents EI as a meta-ability which comprises of an important set of non-IQ factors such as motivation, impulse-control, mood regulation and empathy which determine how well an individual uses other abilities such as cognitive intelligence. The ability to understand oneself and others, being able to relate to people and possessing the ability to adapt and cope with one's surroundings which in turn increases one's chances of success when dealing with environmental demands are, therefore, at the core of EI (Bar-on, 2006; De Weerdts & Rossi, 2012).

## *Measures*

Examples of mixed-model EI measures include the Bar-On EQ-I, the Schutte EI and the Emotional Competence Inventory (Gignac, 2010a). Mixed models are considered more heterogeneous in nature, combining several individual difference constructs such as

emotionally-based competencies, skills, personality and motivation, and tend to be measured via self-report and or rater-report inventories (Gignac, 2010b; Psilopanagloti et al., 2012). Self-report or trait measures of EI comprise a series of statements pertaining to behavioural preferences and styles. Respondents typically respond to anchored rating scales that index individual differences in people's behavioural preferences and styles relating to emotions. Trait measures of EI also provide insight into individual differences in emotional self-efficacy, which like the broader concept of self-efficacy, may be an important characteristic of psychological well-being (Palmer et al., 2007).

### *2.3.2.3 Competency models*

Competency models comprise of a set of emotional competencies defined as learned capabilities based on EI (Palmer et al., 2007). According to Palmer (2007), Goleman is the proponent who developed the competency model of EI. Goleman (1995) suggested that a definition of EI might involve four higher-order factors including:

- Self-awareness which is the capacity to recognise emotions in oneself;
- Self-management which is the capacity to regulate emotions in oneself;
- Social awareness which the capacity to recognise emotions in others; and
- Relationship management, which is the capacity to regulate emotions in others.

### *Measures*

Competency-based models of EI use behavioural measures typically comprising a series of statements relating to emotionally intelligent behaviours (e.g., “Demonstrates an understanding of others’ feelings”) (Palmer et al., 2007). Respondents typically respond to anchored rating scales; however, response scales relate to how often the behaviour is displayed (e.g., 1 = almost never and 5 = almost always). As in competency or 360-degree capability assessments, these measures of EI index individual differences in how often people display emotionally intelligent behaviour. The developers of these assessments argue that the frequency with which individuals display emotionally intelligent behaviours is a manifestation of their actual EI (Boyatzis, Goleman & Rhee, 2000).



### **2.3.3 A new development in the field of EI**

A new development has been introduced fairly recently in the field of EI. Palmer and Stough at the Swinburne University conceptualised the Genos EI as an EI inventory for workplace applications (Palmer et al., 2009). It was initially introduced as the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUIET) which was later further developed into the Genos EI (Palmer et al., 2009).

#### *2.3.3.1 GENOS EI inventory*

Citing confusion concerning the nature and boundaries of the concept of EI, Palmer et al. (2007) established a common definition and taxonomic model of EI that comprises the primary facets of the construct.

From a systematic review of the EI literature and a comparison of the variables currently placed under the banner of the construct, Palmer et al. (2007) theoretically identified five common facets of EI namely:

- Emotional self-awareness and expression which is the skill with which individuals perceive and express their emotions;
- Emotional awareness of others which is the skill with which individuals perceive and understand the emotions of others;
- Emotional reasoning which is the skill with which individuals utilise emotions in reasoning and decision-making;
- Emotional self-management which is the skill with which individuals manage their own emotions; and
- Emotional management of others, which is the skill with which individuals help others manage their emotions.

Palmer et al. (2007) define EI as “the skill with which one perceives, expresses, reasons with and manages their own and others’ emotions” (p. 60). Gignac (2010a) recommended that EI be defined as “the ability to purposively adapt, shape, and select environments through the use of emotionally relevant processes” (p. 131).

Gignac (2010a) added the concepts of maximal EI performance and typical EI performance to the conceptualisation of EI. According to Gignac (2010a), these two

concepts were preferable to the commonly-used “ability-based model” and “mixed-model” distinction. Maximal performance test scores represent the highest level of ability that an individual can manifest at a particular time. In contrast, typical performance test scores represent how an individual will most likely behave, think, or feel across a broad range of situations.

Based on the above considerations, Palmer and Stough (2009, as cited in Gignac, 2010a, p. 310) considered it useful to develop a psychometric measure consisting of a specifically designed self-report and rater-report measure of ‘typical EI performance’ for potential use in workplace settings (thus a measure with items which contained workplace contexts and/or wording). The focus was on developing an inventory that measured EI-relevant dimensions only, instead of an amalgamation of EI, personality, and other competencies (Gignac, 2010a).

They developed a 64-item self-report inventory to measure the five factors. After an extensive factor analytic investigation, they concluded that seven substantive EI factors (instead of five) represented the SUEIT factor structure. Emotional Recognition/Emotional Expression was more accurately represented by two separate factors (Emotional Recognition in the Self and Emotional Expression), and Emotional Management was also more accurately represented by two separate factors (Emotional Management of the Self and Emotional Management of Others) (Gignac, 2010b).

The title of the revised 70-item measure was changed from the SUEIT to the Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Genos EI). Table 2.5 lists the seven Genos EI dimensions and their corresponding definitions. The inventory’s Likert scale reflects a 5-point continuum (‘almost never’, ‘seldom’, ‘sometimes’, ‘usually’, and ‘almost always’) (Gignac, 2010a).

Table 2.5

*Genos EI seven-factor model*

<b>Subscale</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Emotional Self-Awareness (ESA)	Perceiving and understanding one’s emotions
Emotional Expression (EE)	Expressing one’s emotions effectively

<b>Subscale</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Emotional Awareness of Others (EAOO)	Perceiving and understanding emotions of others
Emotional Reasoning (ER)	Utilising emotional information in decision-making
Emotional Self-Management (ESM)	Managing one's own emotions effectively
Emotional Management of Others (EMO)	Managing the emotions of other's effectively
Emotional Self-Control (ESC)	Controlling one's strong emotions
Total EI	Overall Emotional Intelligence

Source: Adapted from Gignac (2010b, p. 313)

The Genos EI inventory represents a self- and observer-report measure of typical EI performance because all seven dimensions within the Genos EI model are directly relevant to an individual's typical application of an emotionally-relevant skill or ability (Gignac & Ekermans, 2010). This inventory serves as a measure of typical EI performance instead of maximal EI performance. Furthermore, the Genos EI Inventory is neither a mixed-model measure nor an ability-based measure but is designed to measure typical EI performance (Gignac, 2010a). It was designed specifically to be used in the workplace as a learning and development aid for human resource professionals and occupational psychologists involved in the identification, selection and development of employees (Palmer et al., 2009). The Genos EI inventory does not measure EI as such, but rather measures how often people demonstrate 70 emotionally intelligent workplace behaviours representing the effective demonstration of EI in the workplace (Palmer et al., 2009).

#### **2.3.4 Criticism against EI**

The academic community has criticised EI since its inception (McCleskey, 2014). The most prominent criticism against EI is that the construct has no scientific base and that opportunistic 'academics-turned-consultants' popularised it, purely for self-gain (Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005; Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2004). Further criticism relates to the measurement of the concept, suggesting that it is measured by means of unstable, psychometrically-flawed instruments that have limited discriminant and predictive validity and little empirical evidence to relate EI to anything of importance in organisations (Conte,

2005; Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005). Locke (2005) cites the constantly changing and all-inclusive definition of EI as a reason for the concept being invalid.

Matthews et al. (2004) support the criticism relating to limited existing empirical research on EI but acknowledge the potential value and importance of EI in occupational settings. A proper understanding of previous and current research showing that EI plays a role in work-related processes (McCleskey, 2014) may, however, offer valuable insight.

### **2.3.5 EI in the military**

Military leadership theory emphasises that the leader's self-confidence and emotional control directly affect the efficiency of the unit in combat situations. Leaders need to know the strength and weaknesses of their personalities and should be able to express emotions to inspire subordinates and more importantly, to control and hide their negative emotions (Rozčenkova & Dimdiņš, 2011). According to Abrahams (2007), the use of emotions should be balanced in order for a commander to sometimes use it to inspire, while, at other times, being able to override his emotions to make sound judgements. The emotional labour involved in a job moderates the EI-job-outcome relationship to the extent that EI is more important for jobs that require higher emotional labour (Wong & Law, 2002). Bartone (2006) ranks the military as one of the high-risk occupations requiring more emotional labour.

Much of the literature on EI in the military reflects anecdotal perspectives by academics from the military environment and predominantly reflects international conditions. A common theme across these studies is that the changing nature of operations requires an infusion of EI knowledge into military training and development (Abrahams, 2007; Hodgson, 2013; Lackey, 2011). Lackey (2011) proposes that EI should be deliberately integrated into the formal army education system at an early stage. The new role of armed forces calls for a new kind of leader who is able to adapt to an ever-changing environment, function in high-stress scenarios and achieve organisational goals; in essence, reflecting a self-efficacious leader (Calloway, 2010). Hodgson (2013) suggests that the concept of EI in the military is only currently gaining prominence because it was not previously regarded as essential. Calloway (2010) emphasises the need for a type of leader that has the ability to quickly adapt to changing situations and the concerns of others, motivate team

members, deal effectively with conflict and adversity, manage stress and create a unified environment.

Halpin (2011) adds that tacit knowledge and job skill expertise are not sufficient anymore in the military environment. A soldier has to be self-aware, able to read and interpret his and others' emotions and then use the data to formulate a decisive course of action. Lackey (2011) points out that EI is all about relationships. The intangible skills and abilities that are the by-product of EI should take the military to new levels of productivity and further enhance an environment where leaders can thrive.

It is essential that strategic leaders in military organisations are equipped with the capacity to deal with change and uncertainty, manage complex webs of interpersonal relationships and cope with increasing operational time spans and broader spans of responsibility (Wade-Ferrel, 2011). The Australian Defence College adopted an EI model as a strategic leadership development intervention to increase emerging strategic leaders' self-awareness of social and emotional intelligence, enhance their knowledge, skills and experience in this dimension and to deliver individually-tailored self-development strategies (Wade-Ferrel, 2011).

In the South African military, Grundlingh (2012) highlights the changes in the military strategic environment and suggests that all military leaders would benefit from a better understanding of their emotions and those of others. The new strategic environment in the military requires leaders who have the skill of being aware of their emotions and how they affect those around them during their daily missions and tasks. To perform effectively, leaders need to have intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to deal with the challenges of these tasks (Grundlingh, 2012).

Rozčenkova and Dimdiņš (2011) found that soldiers' level of EI predicts the social identification with their unit. They further found that low self-awareness, low self-regard and poor problem-solving skills among soldiers negatively influenced their social identification with their unit. Soldiers' adaptation, stress management and general mood factors of EI further had indirect effects on the relationship between the commander's transformational leadership and soldiers' social identification with their unit. These findings suggest that military leaders may strengthen soldiers' identification with their unit by teaching and developing their EI skills.

In a survey undertaken among the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College class 2006-01, Abrahams (2007) found that commanders with poor EI scored poorly on loyalty, communication skills and sense of humour, all aspects that are indicative of the quality of command climate. Abrahams (2007) believes that poor organisational climate will have profoundly negative implications for the army as leaders with low EI jeopardise the command climate by isolating themselves emotionally from their subordinates. This situation restricts subordinates' access to information, and the gap is widened when leaders with poor self-awareness and little self-control publicly vent their feelings. Leaders who are high in EI are more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, open to feedback from subordinates, and are more likely to establish a climate in which their subordinates can excel (Abrahams, 2007).

In a South African context, Grundlingh (2012) identified a significant positive relationship between total EI and leader success in the military.

### **2.3.6 EI and generational differences**

There is limited research on the relationship between EI and generational differences (Codier, Freel, Kamikawa, & Morrison, 2011). Findings from studies focusing on EI and generations show that EI levels do not differ between generations (Akduman, Hatipoğlu, & Yüksekbiçgili, 2015; Thoti, 2016). Codier et al. (2011) did not find any significant differences between generational cohorts' mean EI scores in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, years in nursing, or generational cohort. Significant differences were also not evident between any of the seven EI mean scores among the generational cohorts. The only significant difference was found in terms of the relationship between EI scores and age in the boomer cohort. Older boomer nurses demonstrated significantly higher scores than the younger members of the boomer cohort in terms of their total EI score. Considering these findings, Codier et al. (2011) suggest that generations develop EI skills differently as they age.

No studies on EI and generational differences from a South African perspective could be identified.

### **2.3.7 EI and job satisfaction**

It is clear from the previous discussion that emotions play an essential, influential role in the work context. Ashkanasy and Daus (2001) suggest that emotions are at the core of attitude formation. If people bring a positive or negative disposition to work, they will process information about the job corresponding to the particular disposition and then experience job satisfaction or dissatisfaction according to this interpretation (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008).

Carmeli (2003) believes that conceptualising job satisfaction as a feeling or affective response to facets of the situation suggests that job satisfaction is positively associated with the construct of EI. This argument is based on the premise that intelligent individuals with high EI experience continuous positive moods and feelings that generate higher levels of satisfaction. Emotionally intelligent individuals are “optimistic” – a trait that enables them to focus on the resolution rather than the reasoning of who is at fault.

Olakitan (2014) believes that carefully managed emotions can enhance trust, loyalty and commitment as well as increase productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness at individual, team and organisational level. Emotions can enhance morale among employees but can also prove to be destructive in the case of negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and anger. Hostility, for instance, usually absorbs a lot of an individual's energy and lowers morale, which in turns leads to absenteeism and apathy.

The importance of identifying one's emotions and regulating them in order to interpret job information in a way that can benefit the individual is evident in the above. Incumbents' job satisfaction, their organisational commitment and their turnover intention are all directly affected by their ability to effectively regulate antecedent -and response-focused emotion (Wong & Law, 2002).

### **2.3.8 Research on EI and job satisfaction**

Carmeli (2003) found that emotionally-intelligent senior managers tend to be more satisfied with their jobs. This finding is supported by Sy, Tram and O'Hara (2006) who found that employees' EI was positively related to job satisfaction and performance after controlling for personality factors. Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall and Salovey (2006) further found EI to be related to several indicators of work performance and found preliminary

evidence that EI, measured as a set of abilities, is associated with positive work outcomes.

Employees with high EI are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction because they are more adept at appraising and regulating their own emotions than employees with low EI (Sy et al., 2006). Awareness of the factors that elicit certain emotions and understanding the effects of those emotions enable employees with high EI to take the appropriate actions that influence job satisfaction. If employees are emotionally intelligent, they actively try to make their true emotions congruent to the emotion required by display rules, experience personal accomplishment and are satisfied with their jobs. Employees who have lower levels of EI tend to regulate their emotional expression superficially by hiding felt emotions or faking unfelt emotions. They consequently become emotionally exhausted and treat others impersonally (Lee & Ok, 2012).

Psilopanagloti et al. (2012) found emotionally-intelligent physicians in Greece to be more satisfied with their jobs. Alnidawy (2015) further concluded that the elements of EI had a positive effect on job satisfaction among employees in a sector of Jordanian companies.

Studies on the relationship between EI and job satisfaction in a South African context are becoming prevalent in the academic literature (Coetzer, 2013). Coetzer (2013) argues that job satisfaction is not only affected by management practices but also by emotions and personality traits or other internal factors that are closely related to employees' job satisfaction. Finally, Coetzer (2013) identified a strong positive relationship between EI and job satisfaction among Further Education and Training (FET) lecturers.

## **2.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELEVANT TO THE CONSTRUCTS UNDER INVESTIGATION**

### **2.4.1 Generational differences**

Existing research on generational differences mainly focuses on job attitudes and work values (Meriac et al., 2010). A plethora of research on generational differences exists internationally. Very little research on the topic has, however, been undertaken in a South African context (Martins & Martins, 2013; Nkomo, 2013).

International research points to definite differences across different generational cohorts in terms of a number of organisational outcomes. Smola and Sutton (2000) found Gen X to



be less loyal than boomers and most likely to leave the organisation if they found a better opportunity. Twenge (2010) found that Gen Y rate work as less central to their lives, they value leisure more, and express a weaker work ethic than boomers. Twenge et al. (2010) found that the largest change in work values is the increased value attached to leisure since it is the most salient work value for Gen Y compared to Gen X and boomers, and Gen X relative to boomers (Twenge et al., 2010). Research on generational differences in South Africa also identified significant differences, suggesting that organisations should take heed of these differences and adopt a flexible approach in dealing with different generations (Close, 2015; Nkomo, 2013; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). Very little research exists on generational differences within a military context and available research mostly focuses on Gen Y (Hyer, 2013; Smith, 2015).

#### **2.4.2 Job satisfaction**

Research findings point to the importance of understanding job satisfaction within a military environment. Findings further reflect significant differences in overall and facet job satisfaction among different generational groupings. Very little published research could be identified that explore the relationship between job satisfaction and generational differences in a military context.

#### **2.4.3 Emotional intelligence**

It is evident that EI is becoming a construct of interest in the military environment both globally and locally. EI is positively related to leadership success (Grundlingh, 2012), acts as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and a positive command climate (Rozčenkova & Dimdiņš, 2011) and has a positive effect on the command climate in the military (Abrahams, 2007). Limited existing research explores the relationship between EI and the different generational groupings, with a few studies indicating a lack of a significant relationship between EI and the different generations (Akduman et al., 2015; Codier et al., 2011). Findings, however, suggest that EI has a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction both internationally and nationally.

Of significance to this study, no research could be identified that explored the direct relationship between generational differences, job satisfaction and EI whether in a military or civilian context globally or locally.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In chapter 2, the theoretical frameworks of generational theory, job satisfaction and EI were highlighted. These constructs were discussed with reference to their history, applicable definitions and relevancy to the military context. Findings both internationally and nationally were discussed, and the chapter concluded with an integration of these constructs and its findings.

The next chapter is presented in the form of a research article and describes the empirical procedure employed in the study. The empirical procedure is explained in terms of the research participants, measurement instruments, research procedure and ethical considerations, statistical analysis and results.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE MILITARY: A FOCUS ON JOB SATISFACTION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

**Orientation:** The unique working environment in the military requires an understanding of the differences across generational groupings and how they differ in respect of organisational behaviour concepts.

**Research Purpose:** The aim of the study was to explore the differences between generations X and Y in the military to determine whether belonging to a particular generational cohort influences perceptions of job satisfaction and EI.

**Motivation for the study:** Working conditions in a military environment are very demanding, including long, irregular working hours and being exposed to dangerous and life-threatening situations. Military personnel consequently experience challenges such as maintaining motivation levels, good psychological health, and job satisfaction levels. Various generational groupings join forces in the current military environment, but characteristic generational experiences may underlie distinct, unique perceptions of work, generating the need for understanding differences between organisational behaviour concepts such as job satisfaction and EI.

**Research design, approach and method:** The study used a cross-sectional survey-based research design. A sample of employees (N = 187) from the South African National Defence Force's (SANDF) Human Resources (HR) Division in Gauteng was drawn across the four services within the Defence Force by means of non-probability sampling. The Job Satisfaction Survey and the Genos EI served as measuring instruments.

**Main findings:** A statistically significant relationship was found between members' overall job satisfaction and their EI. Statistically significant differences further were evident between Gen X and Gen Y in terms of two job satisfaction facets, namely promotion and supervision. Gen X and Gen Y did not differ significantly in terms of their overall job satisfaction and total EI.

**Practical/managerial implications:** Management in the SANDF could investigate possibilities for improving job satisfaction facets such as fringe benefits, contingent rewards and operating conditions, especially for Gen X. Since findings suggest that members with higher EI, in general, will be more satisfied with their jobs, it may be valuable to incorporate EI as construct in the screening of future intakes or the capacity development of existing members.

**Contribution/value-add:** The research appears to be the first investigating the relationships between generational membership, job satisfaction and EI in a South African military context. Findings may guide effective organisational policies to maintain and retain a loyal, productive pool of human resources despite underlying differences between the generations.

**Keywords:** cohorts, emotional intelligence, generational differences, Genos EI, Gen X, Gen Y, HR, job satisfaction, Job Satisfaction Survey, military, SANDF

## INTRODUCTION

### Key focus of the study

Most authors agree about the existence of four generations (Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010), namely traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. The USA categorisation was selected for the current research as it closely resembles the age distribution of the participants. In this categorisation traditionalists are indicated as being born over period 1923 – 1942, baby boomers over period 1943 – 1962, Generation X over period 1963 – 1983 and Generation Y over period 1984 – 2001 (Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). The traditionalists are, however, no longer active participants in the mainstream workforce (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008).

Various studies confirm differences among generational groupings in terms of work values (Twenge & Campbell, 2013), job satisfaction (Martins & Martins, 2013), work ethic (Meriac, Woehr & Banister, 2010) and career orientations (Lyons, Ng & Schweiter, 2013). Acknowledging these differences could assist organisations in reducing workplace conflict and misunderstandings between co-workers (Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). These differences in work-related behaviour and attitudes could also impact on employees' job satisfaction and could indicate a need for creative and effective organisational policies,

leadership strategies and management styles to attract and retain productive employees (Curry, 2005).

Compared to a civilian environment, the military requires a different approach of leveraging diversity factors across generations for organisational effectiveness. Literature on generational differences in the military typically reflects an international perspective, and members of the armed forces themselves undertook many of the studies (Hyler, 2013). These studies typically focused on a single or only two generations, depending on the time of publication. A common theme across these studies was that different generations, especially Gen Y, might require the military to develop targeted policies to attract, retain, and effectively develop them (Halpin, 2011).

Employees in the military typically have to cope with complex demands that involve cognitive, physical, interpersonal and emotional aspects as well as life-threatening and dangerous situations (De Beer & Van Heerden, 2014). Job satisfaction in the military, for instance, may be somewhat unique due to the inherent stressors associated with the work environment (Sanchez, Bray, Vincus, & Bann, 2004). De Beer and Van Heerden (2014) emphasised the importance of exploring the role of positive psychological constructs such as EI in the military considering the changing times, diverse demographics and new demands of modern-day warfare.

The relationship between job satisfaction and the construct of EI received some research interest (Psilopanagloti, Anagnostopoulos, Mourtou, & Niakas, 2012). At an interpersonal level, the regulatory processes and emotional awareness associated with EI is expected to benefit a person's social relationships. Intra-personally, being aware of one's emotions can lead to regulating stress and negative emotions to perform better at work (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008).

## **Background to the study**

Globalisation, accelerated technology, demographic changes and changes in social trends impact significantly on organisations (Twenge & Campbell, 2013). One such trend is that people of different generations, varying considerably in terms of attitudes, values and work ethic have to work together (Kunze & Boehm, 2013). The multigenerational workforce brings different values and demands to work, and if managers and co-workers do not

sufficiently acknowledge this, it leads to tension and decreases in job satisfaction and productivity (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Given the reality of a multigenerational workforce, the imminent departure of older, skilled and knowledgeable workers, the shortage of highly skilled employees, a war for talent and retention challenges, the impact of intergenerational dynamics deserves research attention (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011). A prerequisite is insight into the psychological, attitudinal and technological differences among different generations and how this could enhance organisational effectiveness (Martins & Martins, 2013).

Some of the critical challenges that most modern organisations, including military organisations, face are the attraction and retention of new talent and identifying work conditions that will lead to positive behaviours and attitudes (Reid, 2013). Challenges experienced in the military include the recruitment and retention especially of millennials (Drago, 2006). Locally, Smith (2015) highlights changing work values and preferences of the new millennial generation as a reason for the challenges in the recruitment and retention efforts of the South African military.

Managing generational diversity may be particularly important in a military environment, characterised by a singular culture requiring individuals to “fit in” and not express their generational identities (Reid, 2013). A very strict fraternisation policy in this context may deter the integration and mentorship of different cohorts in terms of the transfer of knowledge. Wong (2000) further believes that disparity exists between junior and senior officers in terms of generational differences. According to De Beer and Van Heerden (2014), the military context is and will remain a demanding one, and the unique demands posed by this environment will remain of research interest, specifically with respect to attrition. Fritzson et al. (2007) therefore proposed research on the attitudes, aptitudes and habits of young military employees in order to assist in clarifying key areas of concern.

According to Sanchez et al. (2004), job satisfaction in the military may take on a unique character due to the inherent stressors associated with the work environment. EI as a positive psychology construct has also been linked to job satisfaction based on its contribution to various positive life (Bar-On, 2010) and work-related outcomes, specifically in a military context (De Beer & Van Heerden, 2014).

This study explored the differences between Generation X and Y in the military by exploring whether being part of a particular generational cohort influenced perceptions of job satisfaction and EI. The next section provides a brief overview of the dominant trends in the research literature pertaining to generations, job satisfaction and EI in the military.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW: GENERATIONAL THEORY**

A generation refers to "a group of people or cohorts who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of critical factors" (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p.66). The theory of generations posits that these shared experiences inculcate relatively enduring values, attitudes, preferences and behaviours in a generational cohort, forming their worldviews (Kupperschmidt, 2002).

Literature on the impact of generational differences in the workplace suggests fundamental differences between generational groupings impacting on their work behaviours and consequently on organisational outcomes and attitudes (Twenge, 2010). The current study focused on the two youngest generations in the military, Generation X and Generation Y. Baby boomers typically carry very senior ranks in this context, limiting the possibility of gaining access to an appropriately distributed sample size. Traditionalists further are no longer employed in the military, since they would have reached the compulsory retirement age of 65 in 2010 (Department of Defence, 2014).

### *Generation X (1963-1983)*

Generation X (Gen X) is frequently described as the children of first wave boomers. Family is very important to Gen X, and they, therefore, prefer jobs that can accommodate their family's needs. Gen X is very result and goal-oriented and will get the job done, whether it is from home or office (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008).

Gen Xers bring a number of strengths to the workplace but they face many challenges. Although generally realistic with a practical approach to problem-solving, their resistance to authority may result in inappropriate behaviours reflecting negatively on managers and peers (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Gen Xers tend to be sceptical, but they have a balanced work ethic, and are unimpressed by authority and leadership in terms of competence (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000).

Gen X is less likely to work overtime compared to Gen Y (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014). They further appear to be less loyal than Boomers and will probably leave an organisation upon finding a better opportunity (Smola & Sutton, 2000). In a South African context, Van der Walt and Du Plessis (2010) found that Gen Xers value flexible retirement options and freedom while they regard a fun work environment, flexible work schedules and acquiring new skills as most rewarding. Gen Xers regard perceived performance, recognition and career management as having the greatest impact on what motivates employees, while boomers perceive variable pay as being most impactful in staff motivation (Close, 2015).

#### *Generation Y (1984-2001)*

Generation Y (Gen Y) is probably the most researched generational grouping (Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar & Kaifi, 2012). This generation originates from families where both parents have careers (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008). They consequently tend to be very ambitious and have a constant need for success. Gen Y is hopeful and determined, polite toward authority and has an inclusive relationship approach (Zemke et al., 2000). Gen Y is a dynamic force in the workforce and emerging as leaders considering the retirement of baby boomers (Kaifi et al., 2012). Gen Y is more confident, trusting and teachable in the workplace than their Gen X colleagues (Howe & Strauss, 2007). This generation has a greater need for work-life balance than preceding generations (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008).

Gen Yers rate work as less central to their lives, value leisure more, and show a weaker work ethic than boomers (Twenge, 2010). Gen Yers further rate extrinsic work values (e.g., salary) more highly and consistently score higher on individualistic traits. In a time-lag study, Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance (2010) found that Gen X, and especially Gen Y, held stronger values for leisure time and placed more value on work providing extrinsic rewards than boomers. Gen Y also valued intrinsic and social rewards less than boomers. The largest change in work values was the increased value placed on leisure. These findings support the anecdotal, stereotyped and cross-sectional findings that Gen Y desires work-life balance and supports the notion that leisure is a particularly salient work value for Gen Y relative to Gen X and boomers, and Gen X relative to boomers (Twenge et al., 2010).



Halpin (2011) believes that Gen Y is quite unique compared to previous generations, and that a thorough understanding of possible differences between it and other generations may assist in recruiting and developing this generation. Gen Yers typically regard a career in the military as an opportunity for accomplishing personal growth, achieving educational goals, developing technical and leadership skills and fulfilling their personal career aspirations (Smith, 2015).

### *Job satisfaction*

Spector (1997) defines job satisfaction simply as “the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs” (p. 4). Judge and Klinger (2008) add that job satisfaction is a salient and deep-seated attitude permeating cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of people's work and their non-work lives. Although employees have attitudes or viewpoints about many aspects of their jobs, careers and their organisations, the most important employee attitude is job satisfaction (Saari & Judge, 2004).

Employee satisfaction enhances organisational performance, and if optimised, employee satisfaction may serve as an incentive for enhancing organisational performance. When employees are dissatisfied, organisational performance decreases (Mafini & Pooe, 2013). Furthermore, if employees' work conditions are congruent to their needs, they are less likely to leave an organisation (Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane, and Ferreira (2011), corresponding to Martin and Roodt's (2008) suggestion that job satisfaction, and not organisational commitment, correlates more strongly with turnover intentions.

Very limited empirical research exists on job satisfaction in a military context. Abedi and Mazuree (2010) examined the relationship between military personnel's personal characteristics (e.g. personality, education and marital status) and their job satisfaction. They found that soldiers with a lower level of education reported a higher level of job satisfaction in terms of the facilities they worked at. Rashid and Sultan (2013), in contrast, found that well-educated officers had higher job satisfaction levels compared to those who were less educated. Abedi and Mazuree (2010) attributed this result to the fact that as soldiers grow in their work experience, they no longer are satisfied with what they have as their expectations also increase.

Job satisfaction recently also received some attention in investigating generational differences in the workplace (Martins & Martins, 2014). This renewed interest stems from the idea that different generations experience job satisfaction differently and that organisations should consider this trend in order to retain a competitive advantage (Twenge & Campbell, 2013).

Internationally, To and Tam (2014) found that Gen X had a higher level of job satisfaction than Gen Y. A data analysis technique controlling for the confounding effects of age and time period enabled Kowske, Rasch and Wiley (2010) to improve the accuracy of their inferences about generational effects. They found that compared to Gen Y, Gen X had higher levels of overall company and job satisfaction, satisfaction with job security, recognition and career development and advancement.

However, according to Twenge (2010), studies on generational differences that controlled for age and specifically focused on organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, job-hopping and commitment, indicated that Gen Yers are more satisfied with their jobs than older generations. Curry (2005) further found that extrinsic job factors such as work-family balance and supervision as well as intrinsic job factors such as the work itself predicted Gen X's overall job satisfaction.

There is a shortage of studies on generations within in the South African employment context. Nkomo (2013) identified a positive relationship between age (cohort membership) and job satisfaction. Boomers had higher job satisfaction than both Gen X and Y, and Gen X had higher job satisfaction Gen Y. Martins and Martins (2014) concluded that the satisfaction levels among boomers, Gen X and Gen Y were very close and that Gen Y wanted many of the same things from work as preceding generations. Gen Xers in the public service were more likely to leave their organisations if they were dissatisfied (Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011).

### *Emotional intelligence*

In 1990, Salovey and Mayer coined the term EI, conceptualising it as “the subset of social intelligence that involved the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, discriminate among them and use the information to guide one's thinking and action” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189).

A number of major models now incorporate EI, including the ability model, the mixed or trait model and the competency model (Khalili, 2012). The ability model posits that intelligence guides emotions (Khalili, 2012). Bar-on (2006) developed the mixed-model or trait EI and presents EI as a range of socio-emotional traits. The competency model incorporates Goleman's (1995) theoretical underpinnings, reflecting a theory of performance in the place of work (Van der Merwe, Coetzee, & de Beer, 2005).

More recently, Gignac (2008) introduced an additional model, the Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Genos EI). In contrast to earlier models, it does not incorporate dimensions of behaviour not directly relevant to the identification, use or management of emotions, and focuses instead on measuring behaviour that typifies emotionally intelligent behaviour. Palmer and Stough conceptualised the Genos EI as an EI inventory for workplace applications. Initially termed the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT), it was later adapted to the Genos EI (Palmer, Stough, Harmer & Gignac, 2009).

Palmer, Gignac, Ekermans, & Stough (2007) define EI as "the skill with which one perceives, expresses, reasons with and manages their own and others emotions" (p. 60). Gignac (2010b) recommended that EI be defined as "the ability to purposively adapt, shape, and select environments through the use of emotionally relevant processes" (p. 131).

Most EI literature in a military context, predominantly international publications, reflects anecdotal perspectives from academics in the military environment (Hyler, 2013; Wong, 2000). A common theme is that the changing nature of operations requires an infusion of EI knowledge into military training and development (Hodgson, 2013). Abrahams (2007) found that US commanders with poor EI scored poorly on loyalty, communication skills and a sense of humour, aspects that all are related to the quality of command climate. Grundlingh (2012) further suggests that South African military leaders may benefit from a better understanding of their emotions and those of others. A new strategic environment in the military requires leaders who are aware of their emotions and how these affect those around them in undertaking daily missions and tasks. To perform effectively, leaders should have the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to deal with the challenges of these tasks (Grundlingh, 2012).

Limited research explores the relationship between EI and generational differences (Codier, Freel, Kamikawa, & Morrison, 2011). In a study of nurses, Codier et al. (2011) did not find significant differences between the mean EI scores of different generational cohorts in terms of their gender, ethnicity, age, years of experience, or generational cohort itself. No significant differences were evident between any of the seven EI mean scores across generational cohorts. The only significant differences were evident between EI scores and age in the boomer cohort. Older boomer nurses demonstrated significantly higher scores than younger members of the baby boomer cohort in terms of their total EI scores. Codier et al. (2011) consequently suggested that generations developed EI skills differently as they age. No further studies on EI and generational differences in a South African context could be identified.

The relationship between job satisfaction and the construct of EI has also been investigated (Psilopanagloti et al., 2012). Carmeli (2003) linked EI to the development of positive work-related attitudes and found that emotionally-intelligent senior managers tended to be more satisfied with their work – they develop emotional attachment to their organisations and are more committed to their careers. Employees' EI further was positively associated with their job satisfaction and performance after controlling for personality factors (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006). Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall and Salovey (2006) found that EI was related to several indicators of work performance. They further found preliminary evidence that EI, measured as a set of abilities, is associated with positive work outcomes. Employees with high EI are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction because they are more adept at appraising and regulating their own emotions than employees with low EI (Sy et al., 2006).

In a South African context, studies on the relationship between EI and job satisfaction are becoming common in academic literature. For example, Coetzer (2013) found a strong positive relationship between EI and job satisfaction amongst Further Education and Training (FET) lecturers.

All in all, existing research on generational differences mainly focuses on job attitudes and work values (Meriac et al., 2010). A large volume of research reflects international perspectives, while there is limited research reflecting a South African perspective (Nkomo, 2013). International research points to definite differences across generational cohorts in terms of a number of organisational outcomes. Research on generational

differences in the South African context identified significant differences between generations with in terms of the sources of motivation, suggesting that organisations consider these differences and adopt a flexible approach in dealing with different generations (Nkomo, 2013).

Very little research exists on generational differences in a military context, mostly focusing on Gen Y (Smith, 2015). Existing research points to the importance of understanding job satisfaction in a military environment. It also reports significant differences in overall and facet job satisfaction among the different generational groupings. Very little research could be found that explored the differences between generations with respect to job satisfaction in a military context.

EI is becoming a construct of interest in the military environment, both internationally and nationally. The construct is positively related to leadership success (Grundlingh, 2012), acts as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and a positive command climate (Rozčenkova & Dimdiņš, 2011) and has a positive effect on the command climate in the military (Abrahams, 2007). Limited research could be identified that explored the differences between generations with respect to EI. Findings, however, suggest that EI has a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction, both internationally and nationally.

No published research on the differences between the different generations with respect to job satisfaction and EI, whether in a military or civilian context (both internationally and nationally), could be identified, pointing to the need for the current investigation.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of the study was to explore the differences between Gen X and Y in the military by exploring whether being part of a particular generational cohort influences job satisfaction and EI. The following research hypotheses were empirically tested:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI in the military.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference in overall job satisfaction between Gen X and Y in the military.

H3: There is a statistically significant difference in the job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Gen Y in the military.

H4: There is a statistically significant difference in total EI between Gen X and Gen Y in the military.

## **THE POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

As far as could be determined, the current research is the first to investigate the differences between Gen X and Y in the military, specifically considering the constructs of job satisfaction and EI. It is envisaged that the results may aid SANDF leadership in establishing effective organisational policies for maintaining and retaining a loyal, productive pool of human resources working cohesively despite underlying differences.

In the next section the research design, the research approach and method are described, followed by a discussion of the results. The article concludes with a brief outline of the most important conclusions, the limitations of the research design and recommendations for possible future research.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this section, the research design in terms of the research approach and the research method is presented.

### **Research approach**

The study followed a quantitative approach (Durrheim, 2009). A non-experimental research design was used to explore the differences between groups and the relationships between the variables. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, and the Job Satisfaction Survey and the Genos EI served to measure the constructs within a work context.

### **Population and sample**

#### *Research participants*

The population for the research was members of the SANDF. Data was collected from the HR Division (also known as the Personnel Corps), across the four services, namely the

South African Army (SA Army), South African Navy (SAN), South African Air Force (SAAF) and the South African Medical Health Services (SAMHS) (Department of Defence, 2015), and across rank groups and salary levels within the different service systems in Gauteng. A non-probability sampling technique was used to distribute 250 (N = 250) questionnaires to voluntary participants (Durrheim & Painter, 2009). A final sample of 186 respondents (N = 186) completed the surveys, yielding a response rate of 74%.

### *Measuring instruments*

The measuring instruments consisted of a biographical information sheet, the JSS and the Genos EI.

#### *Biographical information sheet*

A biographical information sheet was used to obtain non-identifying information about participants' gender, length of service, type of employment, highest educational qualifications, and their age. This information served only to categorise respondents into generational cohorts and for descriptive purposes. To ensure anonymity, the biographical information sheet did not include unique identifiers such as participants' identity numbers, force numbers or names.

#### *Job satisfaction survey*

The JSS, developed by Spector (1985) was designed to assess employee attitudes about aspects of their jobs (Watson, Thompson & Meade, 2007). The measure has been validated as a reliable instrument to assess major dimensions of job satisfaction applicable specifically to human service, public and non-profit sector organisations (Spector, 1985).

The JSS measures one construct (job satisfaction) and consists of 36 items (for instance, "I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do"). It covers nine facets (pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work and communication) (Spector, 1985). Response options range from, 1 = disagree very much, 2 = disagree moderately, 3 = disagree slightly, 4 = agree slightly, 5 = agree moderately, to 6 = agree very much.

Reliability data for the total scale and subscales show reasonable internal consistency and the limited test-retest data indicate good reliability over time. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from between .62 and .82 for the subscales and .91 for the total scale (Spector, 1985). Lumley et al. (2011) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92 for the total scale in a study undertaken at four information technology companies in South Africa.

### *Genos EI*

The Genos EI inventory consists of a full version (70-items), a concise version (31-items) and a short version (14-items). The difference between the three versions relates to the reliability levels of the subscales and applicability for research and professional purposes such as recruitment and selection. The full version of the Genos EI is regarded as the flagship and can be used for both research and professional purposes; the concise version is only applicable for research purposes and possible educational scenarios while the short version should only be used for research scenarios.

EI was measured in the current study by means of the Genos EI concise version due to time constraints and its applicability in research scenarios. The concise version is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 31 items (e.g., "I demonstrate to others that I have considered their feelings in decisions I make at work").

Gignac (2010a) found very high levels of internal consistency reliability for total EI scores, namely scores of higher than .90 across five nationalities including South Africa with the subscale score reliabilities at approximately .80. Gignac (2010a), however, cautioned against using the subscales for recruitment and selection purposes since the reliability ranged between .74 and .87 for the questionnaire. Gignac and Ekermans (2010) found internal consistency reliabilities of approximately .94 for a sample of black and white South Africans.

### *Research procedure and ethical considerations*

Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the ethics committee of the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at UNISA and permission to conduct the research in the SANDF was obtained from Defence Intelligence. The field workers who distributed the questionnaires were trained beforehand on the process for distributing and collecting the questionnaires. As confirmation of the briefing, field workers



had to agree to a confidentiality clause outlining their responsibility for the safekeeping and confidentiality of the completed questionnaires.

Two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires were distributed across the HR fraternity consisting of rank bearing officers and non-commissioned officers working in the HR Division. Participants received a consent form and participant information leaflet that explained the purpose of the research, potential risks and discomfort, as well as potential benefits to participants and the organisation. It also set out confidentiality measures, the voluntary nature of participation, information on the researcher's supervisor and participants' rights.

Due to the working arrangements participants were requested to complete the survey at their own time, but the researcher was available to answer any questions. Upon completing the questionnaires, participants returned them to the field workers who kept them secure until the researcher collected the completed questionnaires. Feedback will be provided to the organisation and participants once the results and findings have been finalised.

### *Statistical analysis*

The data collected by means of the measuring instruments were captured electronically into a useable format for statistical analysis. The data analysis was conducted by means of IBM SPSS 24. A qualified statistician cleaned, analysed and interpreted the data.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the distribution of the data and to summarise the means and standard deviations. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were computed to determine the reliability of the measuring instruments (Cohen, 1988).

Inferential statistics were used to determine the correlation between the variables under investigation. Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength and direction of the correlations between the JSS scales and EI for the group in total as well as for Gen X and Y respectively. The alpha value for statistical significance was set at .05. Cohen's (1998) guidelines for the practical significance of correlations were used with small practical effect:  $d = .20 - .49$ ; moderate effect:  $d = .50 - .79$  and large effect:  $d \geq .80$  (Cohen, 1998).

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether a difference exists between the mean scores of the two generational groupings for the different variables.

## RESULTS

In this section, the results of the study in respect of the descriptive statistics and inferential statistics are reported. The objective of the research was to explore the differences between Gen X and Y in the military by exploring whether being part of a particular generational cohort influences perceptions of job satisfaction and EI.

### Demographics

The characteristics of the research participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1:

*Demographics of the participants (N = 186)*

Item	Category	F	%
Gender	Male	86	46.2
	Female	97	52.2
	Missing	3	1.6
Tenure	<2 years	53	28.5
	2-5 years	64	34.4
	6-9 years	27	14.5
	>9 years	37	19.9
	Missing	5	2.7
Type of Employment	Permanent	91	48.9
	Contract	89	47.8
	Part-Time	3	1.6
	Missing	3	1.6
Highest Academic Qualification	Matric	80	43
	Certificate	34	18.3
	Diploma	40	21.5
	Degree	24	12.9
	Higher Degree (M/D)	4	2.2
	Missing	4	2.2
Age Group	18-25	21	11.3
	26-35	58	31.2
	36-45	46	24.7
	46-55	56	30.1
	56+	2	1.1
	Missing	3	1.6

In terms of gender, the sample was slightly skewed toward females (52.2%;  $n = 97$ ) with a male participation rate of about 46.2% ( $n = 86$ ). Certain groups were combined in the demographic frequencies due to poor responses on certain factors within the variables. Type of employment presents the combination of contract and part-time employees since there were only three part-time employees as respondents. The combined sample consisted of nearly equal permanently employed (49.7%;  $n = 91$ ) and contract or part-time (50.3%;  $n = 89$ ) employees.

Highest Educational Qualification presents the combination of a degree with a higher degree (M and D) as only four (2.2%;  $n = 4$ ) respondents held a higher degree. In the combined sample, about half of the participants (43.72%;  $n = 80$ ) had a matric qualification, 18.58% ( $n = 34$ ) held a certificate, 21.86% ( $n = 40$ ) held a diploma and 15.85% ( $n = 24$ ) held a degree or higher qualification.

The age variable was categorised into the two generational groupings of interest in the study (Gen X and Gen Y), as presented in Figure 1 with Gen Y constituting 43.65% ( $n = 79$ ) and Gen X constituting 56.35% ( $n = 102$ ) of the overall sample.

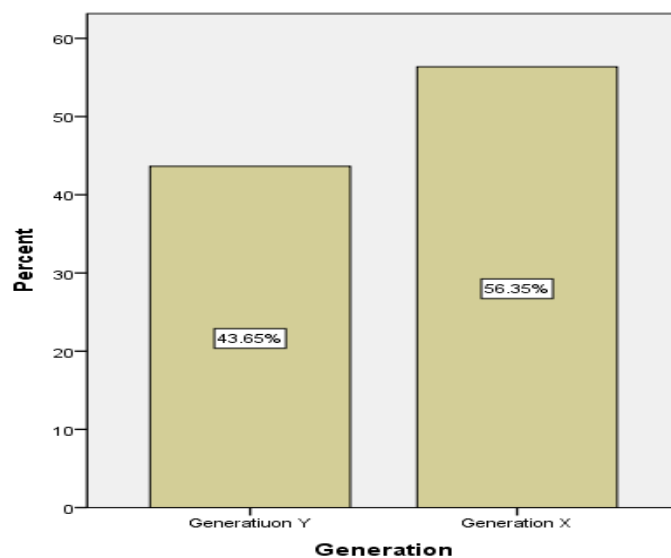


Figure 1: Combined distribution of age into generations ( $n = 186$ )

## Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 reports the mean (M) standard deviation (SD) and Cronbach's alpha for the JSS and its subscales and Figure 2 provides the means scores as well as the midpoint of the JSS.

Table 2:

*Descriptive statistics for the JSS and subscales*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Pay	186	1.00	6.00	3.9418	1.17878	.69
Promotion	186	1.00	6.00	3.2115	1.24882	.65
Supervision	186	1.00	6.00	4.7849	1.13845	.76
Fringe benefits	186	1.00	6.00	3.7065	1.15041	.58
Contingent rewards	186	1.00	6.00	3.6927	1.23988	.66
Operating conditions	186	1.00	6.00	3.3315	1.34477	.65
Co-workers	186	1.00	6.00	4.4816	1.15203	.73
Nature of work	186	1.00	6.00	4.8454	1.11037	.78
Communication	186	1.00	6.00	4.0914	1.22103	.67
Total job satisfaction mean	186	1.75	5.61	3.9878	.76198	.91
Valid N (listwise)	186					

Mean scores could range from 1 to 6 and were as follows: Overall JSS ( $M = 3.99$ ;  $SD = .76$ ), pay ( $M = 3.94$ ;  $SD = 1.18$ ), promotion ( $M = 3.21$ ;  $SD = 1.25$ ), supervision ( $M = 4.78$ ;  $SD = 1.14$ ), fringe benefits ( $M = 3.71$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ), contingent rewards ( $M = 3.69$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ ), operating conditions ( $M = 3.33$ ;  $SD = 1.34$ ), co-workers ( $M = 4.48$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ), nature of work ( $M = 4.85$ ;  $SD = 1.11$ ) and communication ( $M = 4.09$ ;  $SD = 1.22$ ).

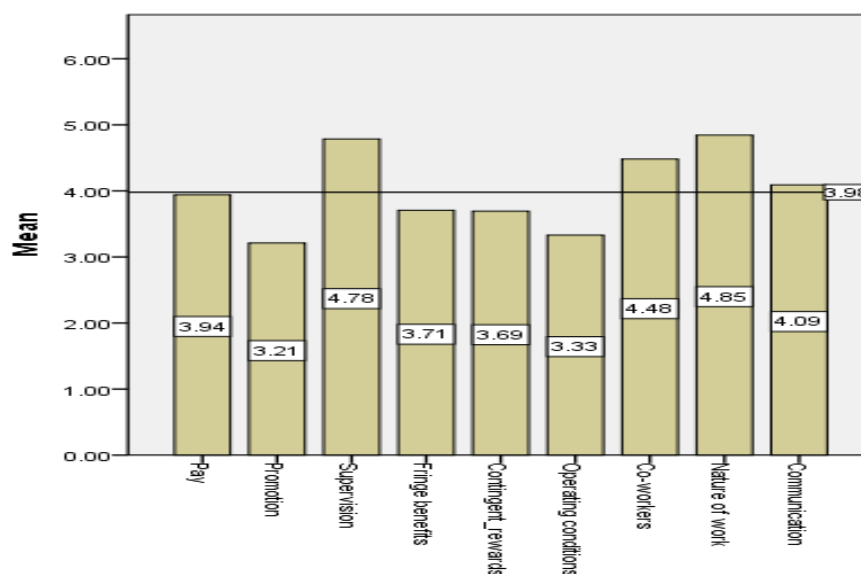


Figure 2: Mean scores of the JSS

Mean scores ranged between 3.21 and 4.85, lying on the higher end of the 6-point scale. In terms of the JSS subscales, supervision, co-workers, nature of work and communication

had the highest mean scores while pay, promotion, fringe benefits, contingent rewards and operating conditions had lower mean scores, although all scores were above the scale midpoint. The total mean score reflected a relatively high level of job satisfaction.

Nunnally's (1978) guideline was used to determine the reliability levels of the JSS and the Genos EI. Nunnally (1978) indicated a .7 level of reliability for preliminary research, .8 for basic research and .9 to .95 for applied research. The alpha coefficient for the total JSS was .91 which is regarded as very good reliability (Nunnally, 1978). The alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged between .58 and .78, indicating an acceptable level of reliability in general. Only the subscale, fringe benefits (.58), reflected an unacceptable level of reliability and it should, therefore, be interpreted with caution.

Table 3 reports the mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and Cronbach alpha for the Genos EI and its subscales.

Table 3:

*Descriptive statistics for the Genos EI and subscales*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
ESA Emotional self-awareness	180	1.75	5.00	3.9042	.71645	.579
EE Emotional expression	180	1.80	5.00	3.6940	.67014	.490
EAO Emotional awareness of others	180	1.80	5.00	3.9097	.67454	.071
ER Emotional reasoning	180	1.80	5.00	3.9097	.67454	.716
ESM Emotional self-management	180	2.20	5.00	3.7031	.64295	.415
EMO Emotional management of others	180	2.00	5.00	3.9213	.65945	.517
ESC Emotional self-control	180	1.25	6.50	3.9500	.75670	.615
TOTAL_EQ_MEAN Total EQ Mean	180	2.34	4.89	3.8560	.49520	.870
Valid N (listwise)	180					

Mean scores ranged from 1 to 5 and were as follows: Total EI (M = 3.86; SD = .49), ESA (M = 3.90; SD = .72), EE (M = 3.69; SD = .67), EAO (M = 3.90, SD = .67), ER (M = 3.90; SD = .67), ESM (M = 3.70; SD = .64), EMO (M = 3.92; SD = .66) and ESC (M = 3.95; SD = .76).

Figure 3 provides the mean score as well as the midpoint for the Genos EI.

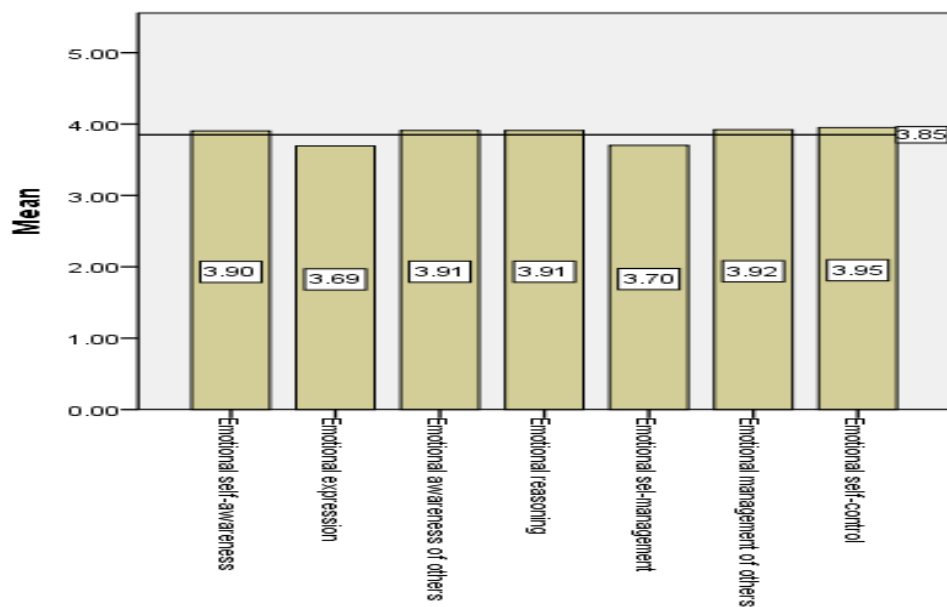


Figure 3: Means scores for Genos EI

Mean scores ranged between 3.70 and 3.95 and were positioned toward the higher end of the 5-point scale. The total mean score indicates a relatively high level of EI as the mean score lies just below 4 on the 5-point scale. Very good reliability (.87) was reported for the Genos EI in total, but the subscales showed unacceptable Cronbach's alphas (Nunnally, 1978) and were consequently not used in further analyses.

### Correlational statistics

Spearman's correlation was used to test the strength of the relationships between the JSS scales and EI as well as for the generations separately to determine where the differences were. A non-parametric test was used because of the small range of scale scores and the fact that the vast majority of the scales were not normally distributed.

Table 4 reports the correlations between the JSS subscales and total EI.

Table 4:

*Correlations between JSS subscales and total EI mean*

		Total EI Mean
Spearman's rho	Pay	Correlation Coefficient .403
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180
	Promotion	Correlation Coefficient .298
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180
	Supervision	Correlation Coefficient .260
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180
	Fringe benefits	Correlation Coefficient .182
		Sig. (2-tailed) .015
		N 180
	Contingent rewards	Correlation Coefficient .265
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180
	Operating conditions	Correlation Coefficient .247
		Sig. (2-tailed) .001
		N 180
	Co-workers	Correlation Coefficient .333
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180
	Nature of work	Correlation Coefficient .481
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180
	Communication	Correlation Coefficient .391
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180
	Total job satisfaction mean	Correlation Coefficient .471
		Sig. (2-tailed) .000
		N 180

A cut-off point of .05 was used for statistical significance, and Cohen's (1998) guideline as mentioned above was used for practical significance.

The stated hypotheses are now discussed in relation to the results obtained.

**Hypothesis 1 - There is a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI.**

All correlations between EI and the job satisfaction scales were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Total job satisfaction showed a positive correlation with total EI ( $r_s = .50$ , moderate

effect,  $p < .05$ ) which means that a higher score on job satisfaction tended to be associated with a higher score on EI and vice versa.

The correlations between the job satisfaction subscales and total EI varied between  $r_s = .18$  and  $r_s = .48$ . The subscales, promotion ( $r_s = .30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ), supervision ( $r_s = .30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ), fringe benefits ( $r_s = .20$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ), contingent rewards ( $r_s = .30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ) and operating conditions ( $r_s = .30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ) correlated least strongly with EI. Pay ( $r_s = .40$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ), co-workers ( $r_s = .33$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ), nature of work ( $r_s = .50$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ) and communication ( $r_s = .40$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ) showed a stronger correlation with EI.

In conclusion, H1 fails to be rejected.

#### *Correlation between job satisfaction facets for generation X and Y*

Table 5 reflects the correlational analysis between job satisfaction and EI for the two generational groupings (Gen X and Y).

Table 5:

#### *Correlations between job satisfaction and EI for gen X and Y*

		Total EI Mean Generation	
		Generation Y	Generation X
Spearman's rho	Pay	Correlation Coefficient	.438
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	78
	Promotion	Correlation Coefficient	.396
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	78
	Supervision	Correlation Coefficient	.257
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023
		N	78
	Fringe benefits	Correlation Coefficient	.315
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
		N	78
	Contingent rewards	Correlation Coefficient	.484
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	78
	Operating conditions	Correlation Coefficient	.413
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	78
	Co-workers	Correlation Coefficient	.282
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.012
		N	78



		Total EI Mean Generation	
		Generation Y	Generation X
Nature of work	Correlation Coefficient	.432	.499
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	78	97
Communication	Correlation Coefficient	.447	.344
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001
	N	78	97
Total job satisfaction mean	Correlation Coefficient	.527	.432
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	78	97

Gen Y showed a positive correlation ( $r_s = .53$ , large effect,  $p < .05$ ) with total job satisfaction while Gen X showed a positive correlation ( $r_s = .43$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ) with total job satisfaction. For Gen Y, all correlations were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) but for Gen X, three correlations, namely fringe benefits, contingent rewards and operating conditions were not statistically significant.

Both Gen Y and X showed positive correlations of medium effect with pay, nature of work and communication. Gen Y showed a positive correlation with promotion ( $r_s = .40$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ), fringe benefits ( $r_s = .31$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ), contingent reward ( $r_s = .50$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ) and operating conditions ( $r_s = .41$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ). Gen X showed a positive correlation with co-workers ( $r_s = .34$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ). Gen Y showed a positive correlation with supervision ( $r_s = .30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ) and co-workers ( $r_s = 0.30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ). Gen X showed a positive correlation with promotion ( $r_s = .30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ) and supervision ( $r_s = .30$ , small effect,  $p < .05$ ).

## **Hypothesis 2 – There is a statistically significant difference in overall job satisfaction between gen X and Y in the military**

In the correlational study, Gen Y showed a positive correlation ( $r_s = .53$ , large effect,  $p < .05$ ) with total job satisfaction, while Gen X showed a positive correlation ( $r_s = .43$ , moderate effect,  $p < .05$ ) with total job satisfaction. Table 6 shows the results of the independent samples t-test used to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in overall job satisfaction and job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Y.

Table 6:

*Mean differences: Job satisfaction and job satisfaction facets between gen X and Y*

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of	
Pay	Equal variances assumed	1.223	0.270	0.644	179	0.520	0.11512	0.17878	-0.23766	0.46790
	Equal variances not assumed			0.636	159.486	0.526	0.11512	0.18094	-0.24221	0.47246
Promotion	Equal variances assumed	0.190	0.663	2.539	179	0.012	0.47053	0.18529	0.10490	0.83615
	Equal variances not assumed			2.529	165.086	0.012	0.47053	0.18607	0.10314	0.83791
Supervision	Equal variances assumed	6.044	0.015	2.529	179	0.012	0.42554	0.16828	0.09347	0.75761
	Equal variances not assumed			2.610	178.996	0.010	0.42554	0.16305	0.10380	0.74728
Fringe benefits	Equal variances assumed	0.004	0.952	-0.106	179	0.916	-0.01850	0.17455	-0.36294	0.32594
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.106	165.293	0.916	-0.01850	0.17523	-0.36449	0.32748
Contingent_rewards	Equal variances assumed	0.126	0.723	0.947	179	0.345	0.17642	0.18629	-0.19119	0.54403
	Equal variances not assumed			0.943	164.844	0.347	0.17642	0.18714	-0.19309	0.54593
Operating conditions	Equal variances assumed	0.192	0.662	1.049	179	0.295	0.21345	0.20341	-0.18793	0.61484
	Equal variances not assumed			1.041	162.320	0.299	0.21345	0.20507	-0.19150	0.61841
Co-workers	Equal variances assumed	1.119	0.291	0.768	179	0.444	0.13346	0.17382	-0.20954	0.47646
	Equal variances not assumed			0.759	160.275	0.449	0.13346	0.17574	-0.21360	0.48052
Nature of work	Equal variances assumed	2.960	0.087	1.120	179	0.264	0.18640	0.16650	-0.14216	0.51496
	Equal variances not assumed			1.138	176.101	0.257	0.18640	0.16379	-0.13685	0.50965
Communication	Equal variances assumed	1.084	0.299	0.684	179	0.495	0.12668	0.18520	-0.23878	0.49213
	Equal variances not assumed			0.680	163.783	0.498	0.12668	0.18633	-0.24125	0.49460
Total job satisfaction mean	Equal variances assumed	2.966	0.087	1.517	179	0.131	0.17459	0.11508	-0.05250	0.40167
	Equal variances not assumed			1.492	155.641	0.138	0.17459	0.11705	-0.05663	0.40580

Levene's test for equality indicated unequal variances, and due to this violated assumption, a t-statistic not assuming homogeneity of variance was computed. The test was found to be statistically non-significant ( $p > .05$ ). These results indicate that Gen X ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = .72$ ) did not differ significantly from Gen Y ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = .82$ ) in terms of overall job satisfaction.

In conclusion, H2 is rejected.

### **Hypothesis 3 – There is a statistically significant difference in terms of job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Y in the military**

Table 6 shows the result of the independent t-test used to determine whether a difference exists in job satisfaction facets between generations X and Y. Levene's test for equality indicated unequal variances, and due to this violated assumption, a t-statistic not assuming homogeneity of variance was computed. The t-test for comparison of the mean scores of Gen X and Gen Y was found not to be statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ) for the facets of pay, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work and communication. The t-test was found to be statistically significant for promotion and supervision.

In conclusion, H3 is partially rejected.

### **Hypothesis 4 – There is a statistically significant difference in total EI between Gen X and Y in the military**

Table 7 provides the result of the independent t-test used to determine whether a difference exists in total EI between generations X and Y.

Table 7:

*Mean differences: EI between Gen X and Y*

		Levene's Test for Equality of		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of	
Total EQ Mean	Equal variances assumed	0.010	0.920	-0.379	173	0.705	-0.02853	0.07535	-0.17726	0.12021
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.376	159.492	0.708	-0.02853	0.07595	-0.17853	0.12147

Levene's test for equality indicated unequal variances, and due to this violated assumption, a t-statistic not assuming homogeneity of variance was computed. The t-test for comparison of the mean EI scores of Gen X and Gen Y was not found to be statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). These results indicate that Gen X ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = .48$ ) does not differ statistically significant from Gen Y ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = .52$ ) with respect to total EI.

In conclusion, H4 is rejected.

The outcomes of the hypotheses are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8:

*Hypotheses summary table*

Ser No	Hypothesis	Outcome
1	H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI in the military.	Fails to be rejected
2	H2: There is a statistically significant difference in overall job satisfaction between Gen X and Y in the military.	Rejected
3	H3: There is a statistically significant difference in the job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Gen Y in the military.	Partially rejected
4	H4: There is a statistically significant difference in total EI between Gen X and Gen Y in the military.	Rejected

## **DISCUSSION**

The objective of the study was to explore the differences between generations X and Y in the military by investigating whether belonging to a particular generational cohort influences members' perceptions of job satisfaction and EI.

### **The relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI**

The study explored the relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI and established a statistically significant relationship the constructs. It was evident that the higher the level of EI among military members, the higher their level of job satisfaction and vice versa. This corresponds to findings by researchers such as Carmeli (2003), Sy et al.

(2006) and Psilopanagloti et al. (2012) who found EI to be positively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

Although a possible causal relationship between job satisfaction and EI was not investigated, it may be argued that EI logically precede job satisfaction and that the statistically significant relationship found shows that higher levels of EI generally can be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

### **The difference in overall job satisfaction between gen X and Y in the military**

The study explored whether a statistically significant difference exists in overall job satisfaction between Gen X and Y in the military. Descriptive statistical information regarding satisfaction levels showed that Gen Y had a higher mean score ( $M = 4.09$ ) than Gen X ( $M = 3.91$ ). Contrary to theoretical expectations, the independent t-test results revealed that Gen X and Y in the military did not differ significantly in terms of their level of job satisfaction. This contradicts research findings by Kowske et al. (2010) and Nkomo (2013) who found that Gen Y had higher levels of job satisfaction than Gen X.

The results, however, support research findings by Wilson, Squires, Widger, Cranley, and Tourangeau (2008) and Martins and Martins (2014) who concluded that the different generations want many of the same things from work as the generations before them.

### **The difference in job satisfaction facets between gen X and Y in the military**

The study explored whether statistically significant differences exist in job satisfaction facets between Gen X and Gen Y in the military. Statistically significant differences were observed between Gen X and Y in terms of only the Promotion and Supervision facets. Gen Y indicated a higher level of satisfaction in terms of Promotion ( $M = 3.49$ ) than Gen X ( $M = 3.01$ ). Gen Y also indicated a higher level of satisfaction in terms of Supervision ( $M = 5.09$ ) than Gen X (4.60). These results might be explained by the fact that being promoted at the lower levels in a hierarchical structure such as the military is much easier than at the middle level. Supervision is also more flexible since lower-level employees typically have limited and uncomplicated responsibilities.

The study did not attempt to determine the reasons for the discrepancy in satisfaction levels. Future research may be needed to explore specific reasons for the discrepancy.

### **The difference in total EI between gen X and Y in the military**

The study explored whether a statistically significant difference exists in overall EI between Gen X and Gen Y in the military. Descriptive statistical information regarding total EI levels showed that Gen X had a slightly higher mean score ( $M = 3.87$ ) than Gen Y ( $M = 3.84$ ). Corresponding to existing studies, the independent t-test results revealed that Gen X and Gen Y in the military did not differ statistically significantly in terms of their levels of EI. Research by Akduman, Hatipoğlu, and Yüksekbiçgili (2015), Codier et al. (2011) and Thoti (2016) support this finding since they also did not determine significant differences in EI abilities across generational groupings. These earlier groups of researchers all suggested that EI should rather be investigated independently of generations.

### **Implications for practice**

It appears that that job satisfaction and EI in the military, in general, are at relatively high levels. Management in the SANDF should further explore the identified job satisfaction levels and consider how the job satisfaction facets such as fringe benefits, contingent rewards and operating conditions could be improved, especially for Gen X. It appears that that military members' job satisfaction is positively related to EI. This implies that members with higher EI would, in general, be more satisfied with their jobs and that EI might be a valuable construct to guide the selection of future intakes or to be included in the capacity development of current members.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Considering that the sample was only drawn from the HR Division and no other supporting personnel or the fighter corps, the results may not truly reflect conditions in the SANDF in general. Researchers and management should, therefore, guard against generalising the findings to the SANDF in total.

Restricted access to higher-level, rank-carrying members also presented a limitation since the additional information would have enabled the researcher to draw further conclusions across all generational groupings within the military.

The study further relied on a cross-sectional survey design, and therefore no causal direction of the relationships between the variables could be ascertained (Twenge, 2010). Future studies on job satisfaction and EI in the military could include a longitudinal design to circumvent the possibilities of cross-sectional studies also tapping into differences due to members' age or career stage and not the generational effect. Participants were not required to provide their exact ages in the study but rather indicated which age category they belonged to, which limited the allocation of individuals exactly in terms of generational categories.

According to Lackey (2011), the intangible skills and abilities generated by EI will take the military to new levels of productivity and further enhance an environment where leaders can thrive. The EI concept should, therefore, be explored further in terms of its facets and how it differs across the various generational groupings in the military to determine whether generational groupings differ in terms of facets of EI, particularly since this construct promises to enhance members' job satisfaction levels.

## **CONCLUSION**

A career in the military both at operational and non-operational level is characterised by a diverse working environment and an idiosyncratic organisational culture. This preliminary exploration of how membership to a particular generational cohort influences job satisfaction and EI in the military provided evidence of partial differences across Gen X and Gen Y in respect of certain job satisfaction facets.

The findings offered valuable initial insight into generational differences in the military and especially into the relationship between job satisfaction and EI in a non-operational context. The study may provide groundwork for further research on generational difference in the military and how EI could be used as a precursor of job satisfaction in this context. Since the study included a very specific sample, its results may not be generalisable to the broader military population. Further refinement of the research design and expansion of the scope of this study through replication in the wider organisation might prove beneficial and reinforce generalisability to the SANDF as a whole.

The role of EI in the military could be explored further to gain a greater understanding on how EI and its facets could enhance recruitment, selection, training and address attrition.

It has been suggested that future research on EI in the military should take place across various levels and this study serves as an initial step in this direction.



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## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from this research study. As part of the conclusions, the limitations of both the literature review and the empirical results of the study are highlighted and recommendations for the practical application of the findings are also highlighted.

#### 4.1 CONCLUSIONS

The following section discusses the conclusions that were drawn on the basis of the literature review and the empirical findings of the study.

##### 4.1.1 Conclusions arising from the literature review

The general aim of the study was to determine the differences between generations X and Y in the military by exploring whether membership of a particular generational cohort influences job satisfaction and EI. To achieve this aim, the literature review conceptualised and realised the following four specific aims: (1) to conceptualise generational cohorts; (2) to conceptualise job satisfaction; (3) to conceptualise EI; and (4) to present the theoretically conceptualised relationship between job satisfaction and EI.

##### *4.1.1.1 Specific aim 1: Conceptualise generational cohorts from the available literature*

Chapter 2 consisted of a literature review in order to study the relevant literature relating to generational theory. For the purpose of this study, a generation was viewed as a group of people or cohorts who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of critical factors (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). Karl Mannheim's (Mannheim, 1952) scholarly work formed the basis for the discussion and understanding of the theoretical underpinnings on generational theory in this study. From the literature, four generational groupings were identified, namely the traditionalist or silent generations, baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Only three generational groupings are still active in the current workforce namely, baby boomers, born from 1943-1962, Generation X, born from 1963-1983 and Generation Y, born from 1984-2001 (Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010).

#### *4.1.1.2 Specific aim 2: Conceptualise job satisfaction from the available literature*

Job satisfaction is a frequently studied variable in organisational behaviour research (Martin & Roodt, 2008; Spector, 1985) and merits continued empirical research in order to obtain new information, in a specific context, to augment and update existing knowledge about the construct (Mafini, 2014). For the purpose of this research, job satisfaction was viewed as “the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs” (Spector, 1997, p. 4). Regarded as an attitude (Spector, 1997; Weiss & Merlo, 2015), its nature implies that an individual would tend to approach or stay in a satisfying job and avoid or quit a dissatisfying job (Spector, 1985).

An important theoretical position in the domain of job satisfaction is the AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) that attempts to clarify key concepts in satisfaction and affect research. In particular, it distinguishes between satisfaction, as a relatively stable attitudinal evaluation of one’s job, and moods and emotions as transient affective experiences (Weiss, 2002), and it explains how discrete affective experiences influence overall judgements such as satisfaction.

#### *4.1.1.3 Specific aim 3: Conceptualise EI from the available literature*

A number of competing theories and approaches conceptualise EI in the literature (Bar-On, 2006; Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2001; Palmer, et al., 2009; Poornima, 2012; Van der Merwe et al., 2005).

In this study, EI was defined as “the skill with which one perceives, expresses, reasons with and manages their own and others’ emotions” (Palmer et al., 2007, p. 60). The current study used the EI model developed by Palmer and Stough, namely the Genos EI. It represents a self- and observer-report measure of typical EI performance since all seven dimensions in the Genos EI model are directly relevant to a person’s typical application of an emotionally-relevant skill or ability (Gignac & Ekermans, 2010). It is neither a mixed-model nor an ability-based measure, but rather was designed to measure typical EI performance (Gignac, 2010a).

The model was developed specifically to be used in the workplace as a learning and development aid for human resource professionals and occupational psychologists involved in the identification, selection and development of employees (Palmer et al.,

2009). The Genos EI inventory does not measure EI in itself but rather measures how often people demonstrate 70 emotionally intelligent workplace behaviours representing the effective demonstration of EI in the workplace (Palmer et al., 2009).

#### **4.1.2 Conclusions arising from the empirical study**

The empirical study focused on four specific aims, namely,

- (1) to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI across Gen X and Y in the military;
- (2) to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in overall job satisfaction between generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military;
- (3) to determine whether statistically significant differences exist in job satisfaction facets between different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military; and
- (4) to determine whether a statistically significant difference exist in total EI between different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military.

##### *4.1.2.1 Specific aim 1: To determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI across Gen X and Y in the military*

This aim was achieved in chapter 3 through the interpretation of the results of the empirical study. Based on the supporting evidence, the following conclusions were drawn from the empirical study in terms of the military personnel participating in the study:

A positive relationship exists between EI and job satisfaction. A higher score on job satisfaction tends to be associated with a higher score on EI and vice versa.

##### *4.1.2.2 Specific aim 2: To determine whether a statistically significant difference exist in overall job satisfaction between generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military*

This aim was achieved in chapter 3 through the interpretation of the results of the empirical study. Based on the supporting evidence, the following conclusions were drawn from the empirical study in terms of the military personnel participating in the study:

No significant differences were identified between Gen X and Gen Y in terms of overall job satisfaction, suggesting that members representing the two generations were similar in terms of overall job satisfaction. This result contradicts research findings by Kowske et al., (2010) and Nkomo (2013) who found that Gen Y had higher levels of job satisfaction than

Gen X. The finding, however, corresponds to research findings by Wilson et al. (2008) and Martins and Martins (2014) that the different generations want many of the same things from work as the generations before them. Possible explanations for the different findings may be the differences in samples, methodology, conceptualisations and measuring instruments employed in the various studies. A further explanation may be the fact that the sample was drawn from a single division in the support services, excluding other support services as well as personnel from the fighting corps.

*4.1.2.3 Specific aim 3: To determine whether statistically significant differences exist in job satisfaction facets between the different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military*

This aim was achieved in chapter 3 by means of the interpretation of the results of the empirical study. Based on the supporting evidence, the following conclusions were drawn from the empirical study in terms of the military personnel participating in the study:

Significant differences were observed between Gen X and Y in terms of only two job satisfaction facets, namely promotion and supervision. Gen Y indicated a higher level of satisfaction than Gen X in terms of promotion and supervision. These results might be explained by the fact that it is much easier to be promoted at the lower levels of a hierarchical structure such as the military than at the middle levels. Furthermore, supervision is more flexible since lower-level employees typically have limited and less complicated responsibilities than their superiors.

*4.1.2.4 Specific aim 4: To determine whether a statistically significant difference exist in total EI between different generational cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) in the military*

No statistically significant differences were found between Gen X and Gen Y in terms of total EI, suggesting that Gen X does not differ from Gen Y in terms of total EI. Research findings by Akduman et al. (2015); Codier et al. (2011) and Thoti (2016) support this finding since they did not identify any significant differences in terms of EI abilities across generational groupings. All these earlier researchers suggested that EI should be investigated independently of generations.

#### **4.1.3 Conclusions relating to the central hypothesis**

The results provided partial evidence in support of the research hypothesis. There was evidence of a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI among military personnel. Although a causal relationship between job satisfaction and EI was not investigated, one can argue that EI logically precedes job satisfaction and that the statistically significant relationship identified shows that higher levels of EI generally can be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

The empirical study also yielded statistically significant evidence supporting a difference between Gen X and Gen Y in relation to two job satisfaction facets. The empirical findings, however, did not support a significant difference between Gen X and Gen Y in terms of overall job satisfaction and total EI.

#### **4.2 INTEGRATION OF THE STUDY**

The study explored the differences between generations X and Y in the military by exploring whether belonging to a particular generational cohort influences job satisfaction and EI. The findings showed a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI but no significant difference between Gen X and Gen Y in terms of overall job satisfaction and total EI. Gen Y further showed a higher level of satisfaction in terms of promotion and supervision, than Gen X.

The literature review suggested that generational groupings indeed differ in terms of certain organisational outcomes and that knowledge of these differences in the working environment could guide organisations in using these differences to their advantage (Benson & Brown, 2011; Close, 2015; Kaifi et al., 2012; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Van der Walt & Du Plessis, 2010). The literature further indicated that different generations in the military differ in terms of their work values and what motivates them. It was evident in the literature that organisations and especially the military, should consider differences in job satisfaction across generations in order to retain a competitive advantage. Job satisfaction has also been linked to EI and the literature points to a positive relationship between the two variables. The literature however suggests that EI does not differ between different generations but that a difference in EI may be found within a specific generation.

The results provided partial evidence in support of the research hypothesis. There was evidence of a statistically significant relationship between overall job satisfaction and total EI among military personnel. The empirical study also yielded statistically significant evidence to support a difference between Gen X and Gen Y in relation to two job satisfaction facets. The empirical findings, however, did not support a significant difference between Gen X and Gen Y in terms of overall job satisfaction and total EI.

## **4.3 LIMITATIONS**

In this section, the limitations of the literature review and the empirical study are identified and discussed.

### **4.3.1 Limitations of the literature review**

There is a lack of research on the differences between the different generations in relation to job satisfaction and EI. Despite of a plethora of research on each construct, there is a paucity of research on the relationships between the three constructs internationally, in South Africa, as well as in the military. This restricted the researcher's opportunities to report on a wider range of research findings.

Furthermore, there was a lack of extensive literature on the GENOS EI instrument and its application in South Africa.

### **4.3.2 Limitations of the empirical study**

Considering that the sample was only drawn from the HR Division (excluding other supporting personnel and the fighter corps), the results may not truly reflect conditions in the SANDF in general and researchers and management should guard against generalising the findings to the SANDF in total.

Restricted access to higher-level, rank-carrying members also served as a limitation since the additional information would have enabled the researcher to draw further conclusions across all generational groupings within the military. The study relied on a cross-sectional survey design and therefore no causal direction of the relationships between the variables could be ascertained (Twenge, 2010).

Age of respondents was not asked directly but the age category limited the allocation of individuals exactly in terms of generational categories.

Despite the above limitations, the study reflects a definite statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and EI, suggesting that military members' job satisfaction is positively related to their EI. This implies that members with higher EI will, in general, be more satisfied with their jobs and that EI as a construct may guide future intakes, as well as capacity development among existing members. Overall it can be concluded that job satisfaction in the military is relatively high.

#### **4.4 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Management in the SANDF should explore job satisfaction levels and investigate possibilities for improving on job satisfaction facets such as fringe benefits, contingent rewards and operating conditions, especially for Gen X. It appears that that military members' job satisfaction is positively related to EI. This implies that members with higher EI would, in general, be more satisfied with their jobs and that EI might be a valuable construct to guide the selection of future intakes or to be included in the capacity development of current members. Finally, the findings of the study revealed that insight into the nature of differences and relationships between generations, job satisfaction and EI may have practical significance, since knowledge about these may inform organisational policies and processes regarding the recruitment, selection, training and retention of military employees.

#### **4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In the light of the conclusions and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research:

Future studies on job satisfaction and EI in the military could include a longitudinal design to discard possibilities of cross-sectional studies also tapping into differences due to age or career stages rather than generational differences.

The EI concept should also be explored further in terms of its facets and how it differs across the various generational groupings within the military to investigate whether generational groupings might differ across facets of EI.

Further research should focus on exploring the relationship between job satisfaction and EI in a more diverse, larger sample of different generational groupings in the military.

#### **4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on the conclusions drawn from the literature review and empirical study and elaborated on the limitations arising from both the literature review and the empirical study. In closing, recommendations were made and practical suggestions offered for further research within the South African military context. This chapter concludes the current study.



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